

**NEW
LOOK!**

PRIZES WORTH **£2,964**
& EXCLUSIVE OFFERS INSIDE!

January 2016 £4.99 growfruitandveg.co.uk

GARDENING ADVICE YOU CAN TRUST

Grow your own

The UK's best-selling kitchen garden magazine

**+FREE
SEEDS!**

'Black Beauty'
Aubergine

see page 28 for your full
growing guide

HOW TO PREPARE YOUR PLOT

- Why you should sow seeds now
- Protect plants for better results
- Techniques to improve your soil

Grow your best
ever *apples!*

5

Must-grow
HERBS

GYO MASTERCLASS

**Affordable
ways to boost
your harvests**



Chris Beardshaw's
expert advice on
growing damsons



Frances Tophill's
top tips for beginner
gardeners



Sarah Raven's
easy kale recipe
to try tonight

WEEKEND PROJECTS: Train a cherry tree • Create a winter lettuce planter



**SALE
NOW
ON!**

Rhino Premium 8x10 - Blue Grass

Strong can also be beautiful!



RHINOTM

0800 694 1929
rhinogreenhouses.co.uk

Whether you choose Silver Sage, Antique Ivory, Bay Tree Green or Blue Grass, our contemporary colours are all designed to complement your garden. With a Rhino, however beauty is far more than skin deep!

Thanks to its class leading features and ventilation your plants will really thrive, making gardening in a Rhino such a joy.

Rhinos are safe and very strong. The 4mm toughened glass will protect you and your family. A Rhino will also protect your bank balance, being around half the price of similar quality greenhouses because we sell direct from our UK factory!

Pay us a visit, in person or online to see what all the fuss is about.

For an exclusive extra discount off our SALE prices - Please quote GYO16.

EDITORIAL

Acting Editor

Laura Hillier 01206 505 991
laura.hillier@aceville.co.uk

Acting Deputy Editor

Emily Peagram 01206 505 979
emily.peagram@aceville.co.uk

Contributing Editor

Claire Munnings

Group Editor Naomi Abeykoon

DESIGN

Art Director James Philp

Designers

Debbie Pratt, Leo Bond
& James Tuthill

PHOTOGRAPHY

CliQQ – www.cliqq.co.uk

ADVERTISING

Advertising Manager

Daniel Hewlett 01206 505 950
daniel.hewlett@aceville.co.uk

Group Advertising Manager

Daniel Lodge 01206 505 951,
daniel@aceville.co.uk

PROMOTIONS MANAGER

Liz Tuthill 01206 505 927
liz.tuthill@aceville.co.uk
Subscriptions Helpline
0844 815 0030

ACCOUNTS

Anne-Marie Hartley 01206 505 902

REPROGRAPHICS & TYPESETTING

Ace Pre-Press, 19 Phoenix Court,
Hawkins Road, Colchester,
Essex CO2 8JY

NEWSTRADE SALES

Marketforce Tel: 0203 148 3300

Printed in the UK

Cover image: GAP Photos

GET IN TOUCH

Post: Grow Your Own, 25 Phoenix Court,
Hawkins Road, Colchester, Essex CO2
8JY Email: gyo@growfruitandveg.co.uk
Back issues: 0844 815 0030
Forum: growfruitandveg.co.uk/grapevine

MANAGING DIRECTOR

Matthew Tudor

PUBLISHING DIRECTOR

Helen Tudor

© ACEVILLE PUBLICATIONS Ltd

New year... *new look!*



Hurrah! It's the start of the new year, and with it comes a new growing season and a fresh look for *Grow Your Own* magazine. We hope you like the changes we've made to this issue, and find it packed full of useful advice and seasonal tips to help you on your plot. Let us also introduce you to our new fruit gardener, Chris Beardshaw. We're thrilled to have him on board imparting his expert knowledge and we can't

wait to follow his guidance throughout the year. Turn to page 76 to read more about his tasks for January.

This month is a prime example of how things never seem to slow down for growers. Even in the depths of winter there are jobs to be done, and if we're not sowing, planting or harvesting, we're clearing out our sheds, washing old containers or planning for the season. We've got expert advice on choosing seeds, preparing your ground, and more, to help with these tasks.

This is also the last chance for you to get involved in the Great British Growing Awards 2016 sponsored by The Edible Garden Show, so please do take the time to vote for your favourite organisations, gardeners, books and events. Not only are you helping to give recognition to those that deserve it, but you could be in with a chance of winning £750 worth of gardening vouchers, too. Happy new year!

Laura

Acting Editor Laura Hillier

PS

Turn to page 88 for this month's subscription special offer:





January Contents



ON THE COVER

Photography supplied by
Gap Photos. Photographer:
Clive Nichols

- 14 ANNE SWITHINBANK WINTER SOWINGS**
- 18 HERBS TO TRY THIS YEAR**
- 22 AFFORDABLE BOOSTS FOR YOUR PLOT**
- 38 TURN UP THE HEAT**
- 43 ASK THE EXPERTS**
- 66 GARDEN CHAT WITH SARAH RAVEN**
- 74 GROW LIKE A PRO: APPLES**
- 76 CHRIS BEARDSHAW'S DAMSON GUIDE**

THE GREAT BRITISH GROWING AWARDS

54 GET INVOLVED IN THE GREAT BRITISH GROWING AWARDS

The voting stage is now under way, and you could win some amazing prizes by telling us your favourite gardening companies

Your FREE seeds

BOOST YOUR VEG BED WITH THESE FREE AUBERGINE 'BLACK BEAUTY' SEEDS IN EVERY ISSUE OF GYO. THEY'RE A FANTASTIC PRODUCTIVE CROP (DIGITAL COPIES EXCLUDED).

VEG

10 MY TASKS THIS MONTH

Dominica McKeivitt explains her useful tips for protecting plants from the cold weather

11 VEG TO SOW AND HARVEST

A useful collection of all the edibles you can start growing or picking

12 JOBS ON THE PLOT

Essential tasks for your allotment

14 ANNE SWITHINBANK WINTER SOWING JOBS

Anne is looking ahead by sowing kale and cauliflower for some great veg additions

18 HERBS TO TRY THIS YEAR

Add these delicious leaves to your collection to give your dishes a boost

19 GROW LIKE A PRO: BROAD BEANS

Le Manoir's Anne Marie Owens gives her expert advice on cultivating this productive veg

20 HOW TO GROW CELERIAC FOR BEGINNERS

All you need to know in order to sow, grow and harvest this flavoursome crop

22 AFFORDABLE WAYS TO BOOST YOUR CROPS

Make the most of the resources around you to make next year's yields even better

24 PREPARING YOUR PLOT FOR THE SEASON AHEAD

Essential information on creating ideal outdoor sowing conditions

27 TOP GROWING TIPS FOR YOUR FREE SEEDS

Handy advice for gardeners looking to get the most from their aubergine crops

28 YEAR-ROUND POTAGER

Add juicy aubergines to your plot with this helpful guide

30 GARDEN ORGANIC MASTERCLASS

Judith Conroy focuses on heritage seed varieties to try

32 BUYING SEEDS FOR THE YEAR

An extensive guide to help you choose the best varieties for your plot

37 PICK OF THE CROP

A range of garden diaries and journals

38 TURN UP THE HEAT

A guide to using propagators by garden author Louise Curley

40 PLOT ESSENTIALS

Sally Nex talks about an giant onion variety and how to avoid soil pans

42 EDIBLE EXOTICS: FENUGREEK

Karen Robbirt from the RHS provides her tips on caring for this widely-used herb

43 ASK THE EXPERTS

A group of experienced gardeners answer your questions, including canker

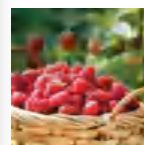
47 GROWING HELP

The latest growing resources recommended by Jane Perrone



SUBSCRIBE TODAY & SAVE ££££S

Call 0844 815 0030 now!



Subscribe to Grow Your Own magazine this month and receive five free raspberry canes from Suttons, plus receive a £5 online gift voucher.

REGULARS

6 THIS MONTH

Helpful gardening advice for January

62 GROW FROM SUPERMARKET VEG

Kim Stoddart's guide to producing familiar retail varieties on your plot

64 NAOMI SCHILLINGER: TOMATOES

Naomi offers great variety suggestions

66 GARDEN CHAT WITH SARAH RAVEN

Sarah is enjoying her kale harvests

68 UNDER COVER

Sow parsley with help from Sally Nex

70 SIMON AKEROYD: PLANTING A CHERRY TREE

Simon plants trains a cherry tree and cultivates Jerusalem artichokes

72 A LIVING PHARMACY

Michael Wale finds a fantastic medicinal plant collection to inspire others

SMART GARDENING

48 SMART NEWS

Interesting developments in the world of gardening, including new varieties

50 SMART STEP-BY-STEP

Mark Diacono explains how to produce tasty shoots and sprouts

52 YOUR COMPLETE GUIDE TO...

Get organised and discover which crops are ideal to sow in pots

MORE USEFUL ADVICE

79 PLOT TO PLATE

A selection of tempting Brussels sprouts recipes from Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall

82 A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO KEEPING GOATS

Susie Baldwin, provides her top tips for keeping these endearing animals

84 ALLOTMENT INSPIRATION

On-the-plot jobs and news this month

86 HOW TO HELP BIRDS IN WINTER

RSPB's Tom Waters explains some quick jobs to make your plot a friendlier place for our feathered friends

89 UP FOR GRABS

Enter our fantastic competitions

92 JANUARY'S DISCOUNTS

Thrifty savings on growing products

98 BEHIND THE SCENES WITH... FRANCES TOPHILL

We ask Frances on her advice for beginners who are looking to get involved in horticulture

FRUIT

74 GROW LIKE A PRO: APPLES

Grow this classic fruit with the help of Lubera's Markus Kobelt

76 CHRIS BEARDSHAW'S DAMSON GUIDE

Chris covers growing damsons this month



If you'd like to keep up to speed with the latest GYO news and developments as they occur, why not follow us on Twitter or Facebook? You can find us at @GYOmag and facebook.com/growyourownmag.

You can also join our thriving forum at growfruitandveg.co.uk

GYO is proud to support the organisations shown below. Their members write regularly for this magazine, ensuring that you receive the very latest top-notch advice from industry experts – it's crucial to us that everything you read on these pages can be trusted implicitly. We're also keen to protect the environment and act responsibly in the garden, so will only list man-made garden chemicals where organic remedies are not deemed suitable. Once you've read this magazine, why not donate it to your local doctors' or dentists' surgery? Failing that, magazines can be put out with your recycling for collection.



This month...

We look at all the latest news and views from the growing world

ALLOTMENT HEALTH

According to results from a study conducted by Essex and Westminster universities, spending just half an hour on your plot has real benefits for both mental and physical health. The research highlighted that growers are often found to suffer less from fatigue, anger and tension issues, while also having higher self esteem. Also, gardeners tended to have a lower body mass index and be fitter. Since the findings, the UK Faculty of Public Health is keen to find a way of utilising unused or neglected land in order to give more people the chance to feel the positives from growing their own.



Chelsea garden goes back to its roots

The award winning Chelsea Flower Show garden, Welcome to Yorkshire, has been relocated to the brewery that was behind inspiring its design. The aim was to celebrate Yorkshire's famous beer industry and wealth of microbreweries – this included a unique water feature comprised of a traditional Yorkshire Square brewing vessel. It is this part that has been carefully recycled and installed in the NGS garden at Wold Top Brewery, who co-sponsored the space with Welcome to Yorkshire. Gill Mellor, director of Wold Top Brewery, said: "Partnering with Welcome to Yorkshire on the Brewers Yard garden at the Chelsea Flower Show was a real dream come true for me. Before my husband and I embarked on the brewing journey, I trained in horticulture and garden design so it's an opportunity to really return to my roots, so to speak."

The RHS is creating a new garden in Salford, Greater Manchester. For more information on the launch and what will be going on at the garden, visit rhs.org.uk

Keep up to date with even more news at our Facebook page facebook.com/growyourownmag, or on Twitter at @GYOmag

NEWS in brief



- RHS Rosemoor has once again been on the lookout for keen growers to participate in its practical, nine month allotment course. This will start in February and will give a new crop of gardeners the chance gain valuable skills and knowledge. To find out more, go to rhs.org.uk



- The weather in 2015 meant that beekeepers saw honey harvests take a hit – with a 34 per cent drop in some cases. These statistics were reported in a study conducted by BBKA sponsor, Burt's Bees. To find out about how you can get involved in supporting research and to raise money to help save the honey bee throughout 2016, visit the partnership's website adoptabeehive.co.uk





Over to you

We asked our Twitter followers what their favourite winter task on the plot is. Here's what they said:

@roryos31

"It varies but a lot of work gets done by torchlight! Like digging up salsify for tonight's tea."

@DaveTheDalek

"Going to the pub on a freezing cold and soaking wet day, taking seed catalogues, a notebook and pen, and choosing what to grow next year."

@jennybowring1

"Rearranging the greenhouse into a cosy tearoom with candle pot heaters."

Like our Twitter page
@GYOmag

READERS LETTERS



A great growing year

"Last year my wife and I took on an allotment plot for the first time and we also started buying GYO. As we come to the end of our first full growing year we are writing to thank you for all your help. Not only have the articles given us lots of advice and ideas we have also gained lots of knowledge, enabling us to talk to fellow allotmenters with confidence from the information the magazine has provided. The free seeds with each issue have been an added bonus,

Star Letter!



encouraging us to try growing produce (with varied success) we might not have chosen ourselves. We are now looking forward to an even more productive 2016!"

David and Ann, via email

Write to us

Share your GYO stories, pictures, community projects and tips with us for a chance to win a voucher from seed company Thompson & Morgan. **Each reader's letter we print will win a £10 voucher and our star letter will win a £40 voucher! Please note these will be sent out by the end of the covered month.** Email laura.hillier@aceville.co.uk or write to GYO, 25 Phoenix Court, Hawkins Road, Colchester, Essex, CO2 8JY.

DIARY DATES

Throughout the month

January 4, 2016

Crabtree ponds maintenance day, Wildlife Trusts, Sheffield. wildlifetrusts.org

January 11, 2016

Introduction to beekeeping, Reigate Beekeepers, Surrey. bbka.org.uk

January 16-17, 2016

Two days at River Cottage, Axminster. rivercottage.net

January 16-17, 2016

The great Gloucestershire potato weekend, Dundry Nurseries, Cheltenham. dundrynurseries.co.uk

January 16-24, 2016

Big Garden Birdwatch – feeding garden birds, Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum Glasgow. rspb.org.uk

January 20, 2016

Growing organic spuds, Garden Organic, Ryton, near Coventry. gardenorganic.org.uk

January 23, 2016

Gardener's kitchen, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. rbge.org.uk

January 28, 2016

A day at the Herbarium, Kew Gardens, London. kew.org

JANUARY IS GREAT FOR...

Sowing Broad beans

Get these started now if you are in a mild area. Offering the protection of a cold frame or an unheated greenhouse can be beneficial so frosts don't affect the seed if you are in a cooler part of the country.

Save for the season ahead

With the prime part of the sowing season almost upon us, remember to save toilet roll tubes, egg boxes and the like, which serve as DIY pots for your seedlings. They can also be added to the compost heap after use.

Improving soils

Work plenty of organic matter into your ground. Doing this now gives it the chance to break down in time for your spring sowings. Fresh manure can scorch plants, so it is important to allow time for this to rot properly.

Top event this month

PRACTICAL PRUNING

Pruning can sometimes be a daunting task for gardeners, but this course at Garden Organic's Ryton Gardens will help. Participants will explore the principles behind pruning and having a go themselves. gardenorganic.org.uk



GET MORE FROM GROW YOUR OWN MAGAZINE!

Join our thriving online community which has over **60,000 members** and features growing guides, competitions, blogs and more! Find us at...

growfruitandveg.co.uk



Look what you've grown!

This photo was sent in by @roryos31
– what an impressive harvest!



THE BEST GARLIC VARIETIES TO PLANT ON YOUR PLOT



FOOL-PROOF WAYS TO GROW BOUNTIFUL EARLY PEAS



FACEBOOK

facebook.com/growyourownmag

Get a regular dose of growing inspiration on our Facebook page, where you can share your pictures and swap tips with fellow gardeners.



TWITTER

[@gyomag](https://twitter.com/gyomag)

Stay in the loop with the latest news and seasonal ideas by following us on Twitter. We love to see pics of your home-grown harvests, too!



DIGITAL EDITION

App Stores

Access the digital copy of the magazine for only £2.99 on a range of devices.

You can also read it on your PC via pocketmags.com

Your top veg this month

FOLLOW OUR EXPERT ADVICE TO ENSURE YOUR VEG PATCH THRIVES THIS YEAR



10 Easy ways to protect your crops from the chilly weather



11 A lowdown on January's sowing and harvesting tasks



12 Your ultimate checklist for the month ahead



18 Five fantastic herbs to add to your kitchen garden



19 We give broad beans centre stage this month



20 Add this robust root veg to your plot in 2016



27 We reveal the secrets to growing amazing aubergines

MY TASK THIS MONTH

Protecting crops from the cold



Dominica McKeivitt, the head gardener at Ardgillan Castle and gardens, shares her tips for cold weather crop care

When the winter weather arrives, growth of some fruit and veg will slow down or even stop. Plants like courgettes, marrows and pumpkins grow very successfully outdoors all summer, but cease producing new fruits when daytime temperatures fall below 15°C. More tender crops such as tomatoes, peppers and aubergines do not grow well outside unless we are fortunate enough to have a hot summer or live in the more southern counties, so are usually best grown in a polytunnel or glasshouse. Whether in or out of doors frost will still kill these plants and

their fruits when it hits. In my experience, this outdoor damage usually occurs from mid-October, and in a cold glasshouse from mid-November – but this depends on location. Every gardener should be alert to the weather forecast and take action before the inclement weather begins. Greenhouses or polytunnels that are tall have better air circulation and less condensation which helps reduce the risk of botrytis (a problem in cold, damp weather). However, taller structures can be more difficult to heat. Heating in general can be expensive, too, so may not be right for all growers.

Covering plants with fleece can give some protection, but the safest thing to do is pick any remaining fruits before the first frost. Tomatoes will ripen if they are picked and put in a paper bag in a dark place above 16°C, but you should always check stored fruits every week for any decay.

Winter varieties of brassica grow and crop through winter, so need only a little help. Folding down the leaves over developing curds of cauliflowers will help protect them from damage, and winds may loosen tall sprouting broccoli in the ground, so these should be staked, too.



“ONCE THE HEADS
ARE FIRM IT’S TIME
TO PICK WINTER
CAULIS”



This month's crops to SOW & HARVEST

SOW

Chilli peppers:

Early sowings will give your crops plenty of time to ripen in the summer. Seeds need warmth to germinate so start them in a heated propagator or place on a warm windowsill.

Microgreens: Need to get a growing hit quick? Try sowing a fast maturing leafy crop such as rocket thickly across a tray on your windowsill and enjoy the tiny leaves that spring up.

Exhibition onions: These bulbs need time to develop so start them in December or January – Christmas Day or Boxing Day are often traditionally chosen by growers.

Sprouting seeds: Use jam jars with holes pierced in the lid to sprout seeds such as mung peas, pea shoots, alfalfa or fenugreek.

PLANT

Cane fruits, fruit bushes and trees: Cane fruits such as raspberries and bare root fruit bushes and trees can be planted anytime between November and March. Just make sure the ground is not waterlogged or frozen.

Rhubarb: Plant crowns in a sunny position in well-draining soil now.

HARVEST

Brussels sprouts: Pick the buttons regularly, starting from the bottom of the stem and working your way upwards.

Celeriac: Use a garden fork to carefully lift these swollen roots.

Citrus: Check lemon, lime and orange trees regularly to ensure you harvest them at the right time.

Jerusalem artichokes: Leave tubers in the ground until you want to eat them as they don't store well.

Kale: Start to take leaves when they reach the required size.

Leaf beet: Pick young outer leaves. This helps to stimulate the plant into making more edible growth.

Leeks: Gently lift when needed, being careful not to damage them.

Mustards: It's thought the cold weather improves the taste of mustards so pick young leaves now.

Parsnips: A good frost will sweeten the flavour of parsnips, so make the most of the cold spells to enjoy this root veg, too.

Salsify and scorzonera: Take care not to snap these roots when lifting them from the ground, especially if the earth is frozen.

Sprouting broccoli: Cut once the heads have started to form but before they begin to flower.

Swede: Lift now to eat, or store in layers of sand in a wooden crate.

Turnips: Harvest your maincrop turnips when they reach the size of a tennis ball. These crops should store well.

Winter cabbages: Cut through the stems of your winter cabbages with a sharp knife and store in the fridge.

Winter cauliflowers: Once the heads are firm, it's time to pick your winter caulis, also using a garden knife.



Jobs on the plot

The new year is here and with it comes the anticipation of exciting new veg to grow. While the key sowing season is still a couple of months away, you can get cracking with your chilli peppers now, as long as you have a heated propagator or a very warm, bright windowsill. As well as thinking ahead to what you'd like to grow this year, keep harvesting your winter-hardy roots and brassicas, pull up any spent vegetables and watch your compost heap grow.

THE CONTAINER GARDEN

- Get ready for the sowing season and ensure all your pots and containers have been meticulously cleaned. Also, stock up on any seed compost, potting compost or growing bags you need. Store them somewhere warm ready for next month.
- Watch out for severe frosts and make sure your clay pots are protected – cold spells can cause them to crack. Stand them on pot feet and move them under cover if necessary.
- If you have a heated greenhouse, you can try growing potatoes in pots in the latter part of this month. A variety such as 'Charlotte' will work well.

“IF YOU FANCY TRYING TO GROW AUBERGINES THIS YEAR, START YOUR SEEDS NOW IN A HEATED GREENHOUSE”

THE FRUIT GARDEN

- As long as your ground isn't frozen, you can plant bare-root fruit trees now. If you have taken a delivery and can't place them in the ground immediately, stand the tree in a bucket of water in a cool, frost-free place to keep the roots moist. They can stay like this for about a week. If you need to delay planting longer, heel them in to a temporary planting hole and check on it regularly.
- Keep checking any stored fruit and ensure any rotten specimens are removed as soon as they are found to avoid the rot spreading through your harvests.
- Citrus fruits will be ripening nicely now – harvest them once mature so you can enjoy them in their prime.
- Apples, pears, quinces, autumn raspberries, currants and gooseberries can all be pruned during the winter months.

Seasonal tasks

THE VEGETABLE GARDEN

- If you live in a mild area, you could risk a sowing of broad beans directly in the soil at the end of the month. Cover with cloches or fleece if hard frosts are forecast. You could also choose to start them in your greenhouse or inside, ready for planting out later.

- If you fancy trying to grow aubergines this year, start your seeds now in a heated greenhouse. Aubergine 'Black Beauty' is a good, reliable variety if you're new to cultivating this flavoursome crop.

- Patrol your brassica patch regularly and ensure pigeons aren't helping themselves to your precious crops. Netting the area carefully can help, or use deterrents such as hanging CDs or strips of foil.

- Chilli fiends will know just how satisfying it is experimenting with different types of these fiery peppers. Have fun researching the varieties on the market and start sowing now in heated propagator.

- An early start with calabrese can be successful in milder areas, and sowing now will mean that growth can hopefully spurt forward before the onslaught of caterpillars. When transplanting tray-grown seeds to individual containers, sink them in to their pots so the seed leaves are just above the compost.

PROBLEM OF THE MONTH:

— Windrock —

Harsh winds and blustery conditions can lead to tall plants such as Brussels sprouts suffering from windrock. Strong gusts which cause crops to sway dangerously in the wind can damage the fine root hairs tasked with taking up nutrients – meaning that yields will suffer drastically. With sprouts, this results in the buttons becoming loose rather than tight – also known as 'blown sprouts'. Earth up your plants as they grow, stake them securely or create a windbreak to prevent this from happening.

Under cover

Some seeds such as chilli peppers, aubergines and even tomatoes can be started under cover now

Ensure your under cover area is ready for the sowing season with a proper cleaning session

Now's a good time for a clear out, too. Throw away or fix any damaged equipment

Invest in a thermometer so you can check your temperatures under cover

If necessary, open the doors and windows for short periods to encourage better ventilation

Check through all your seed packets and throw any away that are past their best

If there is heavy snow, brush this off your greenhouse and cold frame to prevent damage

Keep your greenhouse well insulated at this time of year with specially-made bubble wrap

The herb garden

Now's a good month to look through seed catalogues and decide what to try this year. Why not experiment with something new, such as ginger mint or Mexican tarragon?

Place potted herbs close together in a sheltered position to protect them against the cold weather.

January focus on: Crop rotation

As you make your plans for the year ahead, remember to bear in mind the importance of crop rotation. Growing the same family of vegetables on the same patch of land year after year can not only lead to a build up of diseases, but also a sapping of nutrients. Divide your plot into sections for each type, and then move each group forward a step every year. The order of edibles should be: brassicas, legumes, onions, potato family and roots.

ANNE SWITHINBANK

WINTER SOWING JOBS

Start tomatoes, kale and cauliflowers and plan other veg crops

Once Christmas is done and dusted and the New Year seen in, some folks rush off to the sales and then start wishing for spring, which still seems a long way off. For gardeners, the remaining cold months give us a much needed chance to plan, prepare and regroup ready for the next growing season. Seed ordering is an important part of this, because crucial sowing dates can be missed if the packets are not in and ready. There's time now to chase down unusual varieties you might want to try, or to order young plants for any crops you will be growing on in this way. Seed trays and pots need to be sorted, brushed out and washed to avoid spreading diseases, propagating cases dusted down and checked and rotation plans should be drawn up in time for your plantings. For me, the urge to see fresh seedlings is hard to resist and by the end of the month, I'll have caved in and made a few early starts with some key crops.

“SEED TRAYS AND POTS NEED TO BE SORTED, BRUSHED OUT AND WASHED”



SOW TOMATOES

Growing your own tomatoes means better flavour, a massive choice of varieties and properly ripe fruit from summer to autumn. Any surplus is easy to freeze as soup or sauce. I usually grow a round, red-fruited type ('Gardeners Delight' is tasty) plus a favourite (sweet orange cherry 'Sungold') and then a couple of unusual or heirloom varieties. You don't have to start this early but I like to stagger my sowings and also find the larger-fruited kinds benefit from a long growing season. In my garden, plants grown outdoors are either clobbered by blight or fail to ripen readily, so I keep ours under glass in bottomless pots standing on beds or growing bags, or in ordinary large pots. To save on glasshouse space, cordon-grown varieties trained vertically up stakes or strings are ideal.



ORDER SWEET POTATO SLIPS

Growing something different is always interesting and an autumn harvest of home-grown sweet potatoes starts with ordering slips. These are long cuttings taken from tubers potted and encouraged to sprout in late winter. You could generate your own from last year's tubers, or even from shop-bought ones. However varieties like 'Evangeline' and 'Carolina Ruby' have been bred to thrive in our climate rather than a tropical one so stand a better chance of survival. They'll be posted out in spring and on arrival, can look slightly withered. Stand them in water overnight, then pot separately into root trainers or other long modules, using a cuttings compost (50:50 soilless compost and grit, sharp sand or vermiculite). Water in, keep in the greenhouse and cover with a layer of fleece to shade them lightly until they root and grow on. They are then planted either into large containers or a sunny bed, setting them on ridges and in cold regions, planting through black polythene.



STEP BY STEP: SOW 'CAVOLO NERO' KALE

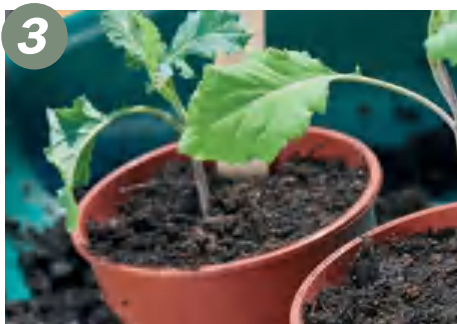
These attractive kales with narrow puckered dark green leaves are as decorative as they are productive. As a group, kales are traditionally sown in April or May for winter use but like most brassicas, their seeds are willing to germinate speedily and readily when temperatures are still chilly. With luck, you'll be planting out by March, with leaves ready for soups, stir fries and steaming by early summer. It is said kales are sweeter and tastier after frost but these summer pickings are still worth having. Of a batch, some will run to seed but others will still be delivering leaves in autumn and winter.



Fill a 9cm pot with good seed compost, making sure it is not too wet and cold beforehand. Press the surface gently to make sure it is flat, then water using a fine rose (sprinkler) on the can.



Sprinkle seed thinly over the surface, then scatter compost over the top so they are covered by no more than their own depth. Leave in an unheated greenhouse and protect from rodents.



After germination, transplant as many seedlings as you want, handling them by their leaves and setting each in its own pot. Should stems be long, bury them almost up to their leaves.



Doing this, rather than sowing into modules and thinning out, means that leggy seedlings can be steadied by deeper transplanting. When grown, harden off and plant out.

TOMATOES *to try*

- **'Brandy Boy'** This beefsteak is said to have the flavour of Brandywine but with shapelier fruits and a better growing habit. **Suttons 0844 326 2200, suttons.co.uk**
- **'Yellow Stuffer'** Large, blocky thick-walled yellow fruits lend themselves to stuffing and baking. **Thompson and Morgan 0844 573 1818, thompson-morgan.com**
- **'Jaune Flamme'** Orange-red fruits look great and have a sweet, aromatic flavour. **Simpsons Seeds 01985 845 004, simpsonseeds.co.uk**
- **'Black Krim'** Fruits are medium-sized and odd-looking, with greenish shoulders and reddish green flesh inside. **Seeds of Italy 0208 427 5020, seedsofitaly.com**



SOW CAULIFLOWER

Another brassica that grows well from an early sowing made under glass is the summer cauliflower. Start them in the same way as kale and don't let them sit around in their containers. As soon as the roots find the sides of the pot, probably during March, harden them off and plant 60cm apart into good but settled soil. Early sown crops started under glass must be introduced to the outdoors carefully. Begin by standing them outside by day and then all night but bring them back under glass, or drape with fleece if it is wet, cold or windy. They'll have adjusted to the weather in about a week and if the forecast is good, plant them out. Add a general fertiliser prior to planting and be prepared to water and give the plants a liquid feed as they develop. Protect from pigeons and look forward to tasty heads and leaves in early summer.

VARIETIES FOR *an early start*

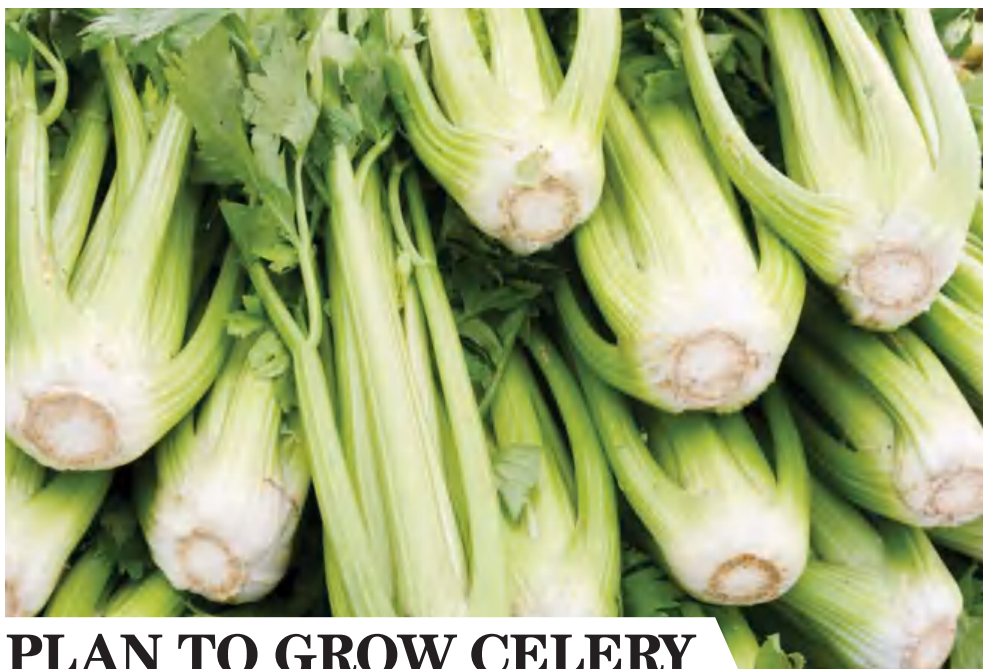
- **'Freedom'** This performs well from early sowings and can be started in succession until May. **Jungle Seeds 01491 614 765, jungleseeds.co.uk**

- **'Snowball'** Expect a late June harvest from January sowings, or sow directly outdoors in April for later cropping. **Dobies 0844 967 0303, dobies.co.uk**



Sow cut-and-come-again crops

Choose cut-and-come-again salad leaf mixtures designed to crop during winter. Sprinkled sparingly over the surface of compost in a wide, shallow container (a seed tray would do), they will germinate in their own time, encouraged by the often balmy weather under glass. They are sheltered from heavy rainfall which combined with cold could easily rot the seeds outdoors. When the plants reach 8cm high, snip them off just above their growing points, enjoy them in your sandwiches or as a garnish and wait for more to grow.



PLAN TO GROW CELERY

I find celery a challenge but give it a go every so often, for crunchy, flavoursome stems. There are basically two sorts and the most straightforward are self blanching kinds. Order seed now, choosing varieties with an RHS Award of Garden Merit (such as 'Octavius'). This means that in trials, they gave a good performance and stand the best chance of succeeding. Sow under glass in March and don't let the young plants become at all pot bound. Root restriction and the shock of a sudden cold spell are likely to trigger bolting (premature flowering). Plant 23cm apart in block formation, so the stems blanch each other and never let them dry out at the roots. Trench celery is more time consuming to grow but likelier to yield better quality, more toothsome stems. Make the trenches in March, digging them out 40cm wide and 30cm deep. Fill back in, adding organic matter until within 5cm of the surface. This gives good, moisture retentive soil for the plants, which should be set 38cm apart. Once they are 30cm high, begin to blanch stems by earthing up or using thick, brown paper collars. Good slug control is vital.

AN EASIER ALTERNATIVE

If all you want is a celery-like flavour, celeriac is easier to grow although again, success depends on keeping roots moist. You won't get long, crunchy stems but the swollen stem base can be grated or shredded to eat raw in salads or remoulade. Chunks add celery flavouring to soups and stews.



REFLECT ON LAST SEASON'S HARVESTS

The cold spring of 2015, followed in late July and August by colder, wet weather made for a tricky growing year. These days, summer seems to disappear as soon as the long school holidays start, only to resurface again for a long, glorious Indian summer. I chose the wrong year to try two varieties of large-fruited pumpkins because they got off to a slow start and were not established enough to benefit from the early sun. Gloomy mid to late summer weather held them back and their fruits only began to swell in earnest during early October, when they should have been turning colour. I grew squash 'Crown Prince' alongside them and these made good fruits. The lesson learnt is to take a chance, but grow a reliable squash as well. I tried both mile long and lablab beans for the first time but neither produced a flower, let alone anything we could eat. By contrast, climbing French bean 'Jimenez' was a winner, with lots of succulent creamy, red-flecked pods over a long period. Runner beans eventually came good too and we were still gathering them in mid October from July sowings. I tried all six Sarpo blight tolerant

potatoes and enjoyed them. My favourite was 'Kifli' – an early main crop whose large, long tubers were recommended as salad potatoes and which delivered great texture and flavour. I often boiled up a medley of several varieties and chopped them roughly as a topping for cottage pie instead of mash. Covered with cheese sauce and grated cheese, they baked into a tasty mix of different textures. 'Nadine' is still my all time favourite though. The 'Crimson Crush' blight resistant tomatoes I tried outdoors did not succumb to blight but neither did they manage to ripen any fruit.



ANNE'S TOP performers

- Climbing French bean '**Jimenez**' I found the red-flecked, flat stringless pods kept well on the plants and stayed tender even when quite mature. **Mr.Fothergill's 0845 371 0518, mr-fothergills.co.uk**
- Runner bean '**Firestorm**' With French bean in its ancestry, this scarlet – flowered runner is self-pollinating and produces a good harvest of tender, tasty beans despite wet, cold or dry weather. **Mr Fothergill's 0845 371 0518, mr-fothergills.co.uk**
- Squash '**Crown Prince**' Attractive silvery green/grey fruits have orange flesh inside. Eating and storing qualities are superb. Sometimes you get only one fruit per plant but they do set and ripen well in difficult summers. **WR Robinson & Son 01524 791 210, mammothion.co.uk**
- Potato '**Sarpo Kifli**' Good blight tolerance, as you'd expect from one of the 'Sarpo' tribe. Oval tubers can be harvested over a long period, some reaching impressive sizes. Makes a good salad potato with a waxy texture. **Thompson and Morgan 0844 573 1818, thompson-morgan.com**



5 HERBS to grow this year

Not only do herbs look great growing in a kitchen garden, but these leafy crops can add a whole new dimension to your cooking

1 BUCKLER LEAF SORREL

The pretty leaves of this herb are a little less sharp than ordinary sorrel, but still have an intense, zesty flavour. The compact nature of the plant makes it ideal for container growers. Give the roots plenty of room to grow, place your pot in a shady spot and keep well watered.

2 LEMON BALM

This perennial herb has a tempting lemon aroma and tastes wonderful in tea, drinks, puddings and salads. The flowers attract many pollinators, although allowing plants to run to seed does affect the foliage. Try leaving some to bloom, while cutting back others to maintain the supply of lush foliage.

3 GINGER MINT

This stunning striped herb is also known as Vietnamese mint, and has an unusual ginger aroma and flavour. As well as the leaves (which taste fantastic in drinks and home-made mint sauce) its lilac flowers are also edible. The herb is fairly invasive so try keeping your plants in pots.

4 LEMON VERBENA

The interesting lemony taste of this sweet-smelling herb makes it ideal for using in teas, cocktails, desserts or flavoured butters. It is a perennial plant but is best kept under cover during the cooler weather and grown in full sun throughout the warm summer months.

5 MEXICAN TARRAGON

The leaves of this herb – which is actually a member of the marigold family – have an anise-like flavour and can be used as a substitute to French tarragon. It likes warm conditions and is best grown under cover. Keep this crop away from frosts in winter and cover securely with fleece.



Grow like a pro: Broad Beans



Le Manoir's **Anne Marie Owens** gives her top expert tips for successfully growing this tasty, traditional veg on your plot this year



Broad beans can be started between October and February, and if you begin early you'll be rewarded with one of the first harvests of spring. You'll need to choose a hardy variety such as 'Aquadulce Claudia' and sow in a sunny position in well-drained soil that has had a good layer of compost worked in.

Crimson-flowered types are some of the most beautiful and dwarf varieties are excellent if your plot is in an exposed area as their compact shape protects them from wind damage. Luckily, spring-sown beans will crop only a few weeks later than those started in autumn, so if you haven't sown yours yet, there is still plenty of opportunity! Growing at both times is worth considering as the

flowers are a magnet for insects and will help encourage them into your garden. This plant will also produce nitrogen via its roots to boost your soil.

GETTING STARTED

- 1 Draw two wide drills 5cm deep and 60cm apart on the veg bed.
- 2 Place the seeds into this space, allowing 20cm between each one.
- 3 Cover over and mark the rows with short canes and secure cloche hoops. It's best to use netting at first so you can keep an eye on the beans for germination.
- 4 Water regularly every two weeks unless rainfall has been heavy.

Provide good air flow around the plants by keeping sowings sparse. This will avoid chocolate spot, which occurs after cool, damp periods of weather. If you spot this problem, be sure to gather all the infected foliage and burn it to kill off any spores. Remember not to compost this waste as it will encourage further spread.

CONTINUED CARE

Use horticultural fleece only in severe weather conditions. Make sure it's not touching the leaves and is supported well enough to cope with the weight of snow. It's also a good idea to check for signs of mice which will target your crop.

After the worst of the winter, remove the fleece and push canes vertically into the ground around the outside of your double rows. Then attach more canes horizontally to make a fence – I find this is stronger and supports the beans better than simple wigwams tied with twine.

Taking the tops off the plant regularly encourages the crop to concentrate on producing pods and prevents black fly infestations from targeting the sappy leaves.

HOW TO HARVEST

Pick the pods when the beans inside are the size of your thumb print. Once the first yields begin to develop near the base of the plant, pinch out 7cm off the tops. Leave a few crops to continue growing and they will produce more flowers which are also edible and can be added to salads.

GYO
says

• Broad beans can be stored in the fridge for up to a week after harvesting, but they're also one of the easiest veg to freeze.

Simply blanch them in boiling water for two minutes before plunging into an ice bath for the same amount of time. Dry them with kitchen roll and freeze in a plastic bag for up to a year.

CELERIAC AT A GLANCE

Sow: February - March

Plant out: May - June

Harvest: October - March



A beginner's guide to: Celeriac

Starting to plan this year's crops? Make sure you consider adding this robust root to your patch

Hardy and disease-resistant, celeriac is a good addition to any beginner grower's veg plot. The swollen root is relatively easy to grow and care for and, although it is not a quick-maturing crop, your patience will be rewarded come harvest time.

As the similarity in names suggests, celery and celeriac were bred from the same wild plant and produce crops with comparable flavours. Try grating it over salads or cooking cubes in stews and hearty winter dishes.

GETTING STARTED

Celeriac is best started in February or March. Sow your seeds thinly across a tray filled with good quality compost and then cover very lightly with some more soil – a thin layer of around 2mm is fine. Place somewhere warm and bright – such as a south-facing windowsill or on greenhouse staging and be prepared to wait two to three weeks before they germinate. When the seedlings are large enough to handle, prick out and transplant

the crops to their own pots. Keep them in warm conditions as young plants can be susceptible to bolting.

You should aim to transfer your seedlings into their final growing positions around late May or June. Young celeriac crops do not do well in cold weather, so postpone planting out if the temperature seems too cool. Your plants should be hardened off before they go outside permanently – this involves leaving them out for an increasingly longer amount of time each day so they become acclimatised.

Choose a sunny spot with fertile, free-draining soil for your vegetables and allow roughly 30cm between each plant and 40cm between each row. Be careful not to bury any crowns that are appearing – these should be sitting at soil level.

CONTINUED CARE

Celeriac needs lots of water to thrive and the soil should be kept continuously moist throughout the summer. Mulching well

RHS TOP 10



RHS TRIALS OFFICER
KAREN ROBBIRT REVEALS
HER FAVOURITE CELERIAC
VARIETIES FOR YOU TO TRY
ON YOUR PLOT THIS YEAR

'Monarch' AGM

These are quality roots with a creamy interior and mild flavour. DT Brown 0333 003 0869, dtbrownseeds.co.uk

'Prinz' AGM

This vigorous plant shows resistance to bolting. Kings Seeds 01376 570 000, kingsseeds.com

'Ibis' AGM

This variety produces mid-size roots and is leaf spot resistant. More Veg 01823 681 302, moreveg.co.uk

'Asterix' F1

This type shows plenty of vigour to overcome adverse conditions. Kings Seeds 01376 570 000, kingsseeds.com

'Monet' F1

As an early variety, 'Monet' is quick growing for an early harvest. Mole Seeds 01206 213 213, molesseeds.co.uk

'Albin'

This variety is high yielding and produces mid-size roots of good quality and flavour. Unwins 0844 573 8400, unwins.co.uk

'Giant Prague'

This heirloom variety results in large roots. Wallis Seeds, 01245 360 413, wallis-seeds.co.uk

'Brilliant'

Mid-size, smooth roots are typical of this type of celeriac. AJP Growers 01275 333 079, ajpgrowers.co.uk

'Ilona' F1

An early maturing variety which displays vigorous growth. DT Brown 0333 003 0869, dtbrownseeds.co.uk

'Mars'

This type creates a crop with quality taste and texture. Plants of Distinction 01449 711 005, plantsofdistinction.co.uk



around the base of the plants will help conserve moisture.

Keep the area clear of unwanted plants, but be careful when weeding as celeriac has shallow roots and hoeing can disturb growth.

Remove any sideshoots that appear and pick off excessive outer leaves, as well as any that start to wilt or die. This will expose the crown and encourage its development.

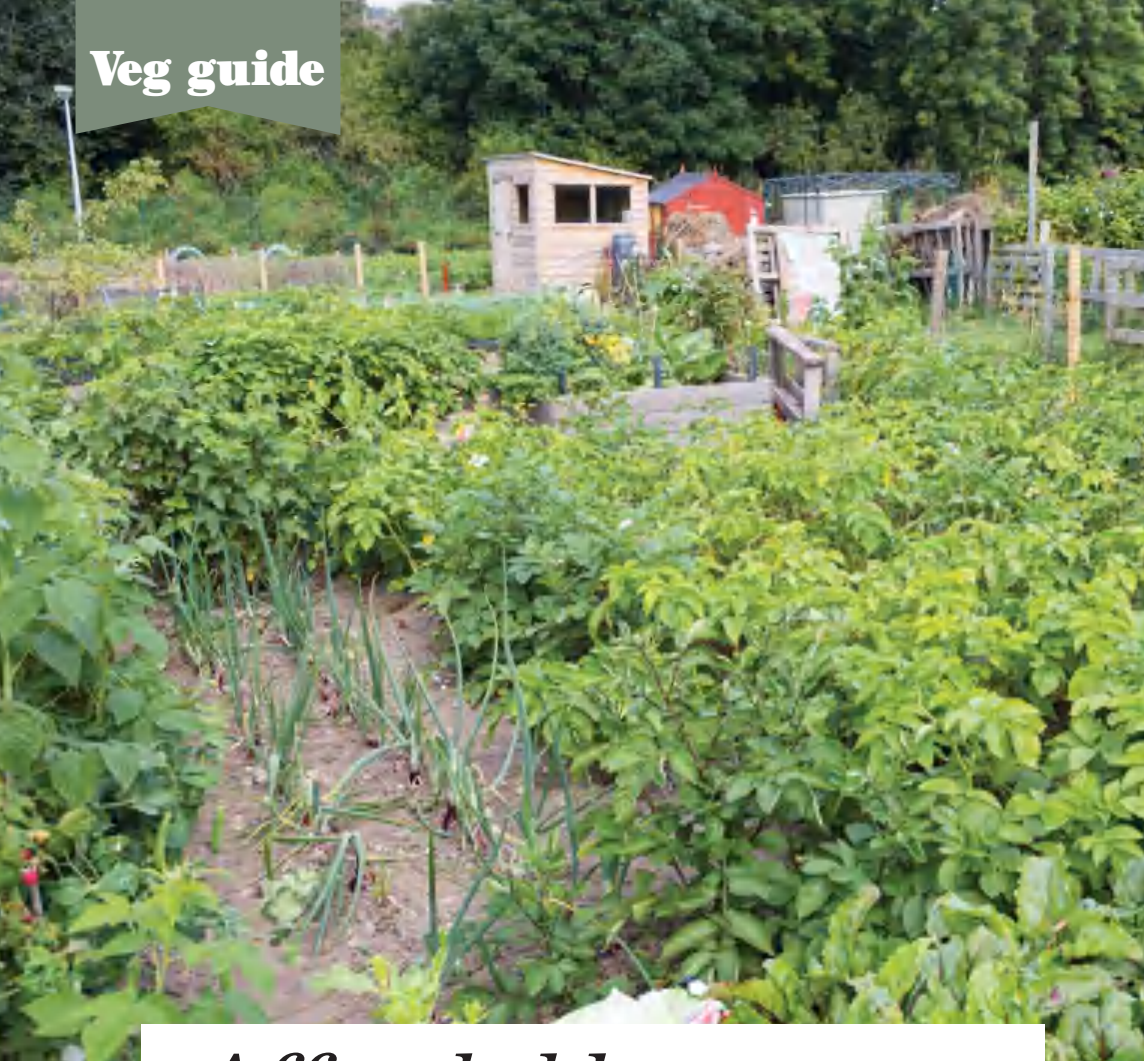
Pests to look out for include voracious slugs and snails, which can be particularly damaging during the early stages of your plants' development. Make sure you have control methods in place – a barrier of broken egg shells is believed to stop them in their tracks, as is sawdust or copper tape. The larvae of celery leaf miner can be equally as destructive, too. These tunnel through leaves, affecting the growth and health of the plant but growing under fleece or mesh can prevent such attacks. Celeriac is also susceptible to a couple of diseases, including celery mosaic virus (which causes stunted growth and the

production of mottled and yellow leaves) and celery leaf spot (which results in brown spots on leaves). As with most diseases, good hygiene, crop rotation and the proper care of plants can limit the chance of infection.

HARVESTING

Celeriac is usually ready from around October when you can see the roots protruding from the ground. These can be lifted right until the following March.

They can be left in the ground until required or you can remove them from the plot to store in spare ground or in wooden crates full of sand or potting compost in a frost-free location. If you are leaving them in the ground over winter, cover the earth around the crops with straw to prevent the earth becoming frozen and difficult to work with. This will save you a difficult job when it comes to picking up your yields when you need them.



Affordable ways to **BOOST YOUR PLOT**

Save money and select recommended crops from fellow growers with these handy tips

One of the most wonderful things about gardening is that there's always something new to discover. Unfortunately, many growers don't have the time, space or money to try every variety they'd like to. With these quick tips you can ensure you make the right decisions by utilising the resources around you.

START ASKING QUESTIONS

A good way of helping you find the perfect crop is to ask around. This is especially useful if you own an allotment – your neighbouring plot holders will be growing in the same conditions as you, so anything that's done well for them has a high chance

of working for you, too. You'll have also had the opportunity to see the bounty of their successes growing alongside your edibles last season.

Start doing some detective work, what crops are people growing? What varieties would they recommend? Are there any tips they discovered to make life easier? If there's one person on your allotment who produces fruit and veg that makes other gardeners green with envy, ask if they have any to spare and offer up one of your successful edibles in return.

Saved seeds are ideal to swap as they're easy to transport from one plot to another, and they're the second generation of crops that will be

genetically adapted to the environment that the parent plant flourished in. It's important to keep this in mind if you're looking to grow them in a different type of soil or alternative conditions, as this may impact the levels of success. Always try to organise a swap as close to home as possible as this will maximise your chances of fantastic yields. There are plenty of growing guides online to compensate for the information you'd find on the back of a purchased packet, including GYO's website growfruitandveg.co.uk

PROPAGATION

Another option is to take cuttings from fruit and veg growing on someone else's plot. This is only possible with certain types, such as shrubby perennials like rosemary, thyme and sage. To do this, cut the crop 8cm from the top at the point on the stem where leaves emerge. Then place it in a glass of water in a light place until roots develop. It's also possible to divide edibles with rampant growing habits such as mint by lifting the whole thing from the soil and breaking it into several smaller plants with your hands, being careful not to cause too much damage to the roots.

Layering is a natural method of propagation that is typical of raspberries and blackberries. The stems of these bushes are thin and can easily reach the ground where they produce shoots to create a whole new plant. Choose the best specimen possible and cut off a branch carrying a shoot from mid to late spring and bury it in a suitable spot on your plot, 7.5cm under the surface. As long as the soil is kept moist, the cutting should establish in its new environment.

Choose the best specimen possible and cut off a branch



"SAVED SEEDS ARE IDEAL TO SWAP AS THEY ARE EASY TO TRANSPLANT FROM ONE PLOT TO ANOTHER"



The Jakoustic fencing makes an attractive timber backdrop in the gorgeous Mediterranean Memories by Sally Perigo (one of the winning Jacksons show gardens, see more about this and products used in the garden online at www.jacksons-fencing.co.uk/lifestyle).

Jacksons Fencing

How can a fence change your life?

Back in 2005 I visited a lady who had installed a new type of fencing in her garden, that she said had changed her life. That's quite a claim, how could a fence make such a difference to someone's life?

Tracking back to before this happened, Mrs Young visited Jacksons Fencing. She was an existing customer of Jacksons and was desperate to find a solution to a problem; 30 years previously when she and her husband had moved into their house, it was a quiet rural area. Over time, a nearby road had become increasingly busy, traffic flow and speed had intensified to the extent it was no longer possible to enjoy time in their garden. The Youngs were considering moving

house, but really didn't want to, they were very happy there apart from the noise of traffic becoming too loud to bear.

Another option was to possibly install a second fence line at the foot of their garden, and maybe even put an acoustic infill material in the gap between the two fences. This is why Mrs Young called in to Jacksons, to pick up the latest Good Fencing Guide with the thought of getting a second fence.

Well imagine her delight when she discovered she wasn't the only person wondering how to dampen problem noise by using a fence? Jacksons had just developed Jakoustic. Traditionally used as a motorway fencing system, acoustic barriers had been

Please go to www.jacksons-fencing.co.uk/lifestyle to find links to Jacksons acoustic barrier information.

Please note, we always recommend you have a survey carried out by an independent acoustic engineer to ensure an acoustic barrier is the correct solution for you.

Win a Jacksons garden gate set...

Enter the free prize draw and be in with a chance to win one of our garden gate sets. We have 15 different styles and various sizes - the gate sets come complete with posts and everything you need to hang the gate. They make having a new gate beautifully simple and straightforward, and they are all guaranteed for 25 years too! Simply log on to your local page, address below and follow the easy instructions on how to enter.

The draw closes 31.12.15. To enter go to:

www.jacksons-fencing.co.uk/lifestyle



adapted for use in a residential setting. Constructed from heavy-duty timber posts and panels made from thick tongue and groove style boards, Jakoustic has the appearance of any solid timber garden fence, and of course has the Jacksons unique 25-year Jakcure guarantee. This was the answer to Mrs Young's prayers. Once it was installed, they were overjoyed at the difference it made to the sound levels in their garden and they told me when I

called in, "now the traffic noise is on the road and not in the garden!"

The Youngs also mentioned their friends and family have been very impressed at how good the fence looks and that it is now once again possible to hold a normal conversation in the garden. There's also no need to move from a house and area that they love, so this could be considered a very happy ending. Now that's how a fence can change a life.

louise@jacksons-fencing.co.uk

For info on any of Jacksons products or brochures please call 0800 408 4733 to talk to your local Jacksons Fencing Centre.



HOW TO *Prepare for the* **SEASON AHEAD**

Get your plot ready for the new growing year

Although the main part of the sowing season is still a little way off, there is plenty to do on the allotment and in the garden this month. Preparation is key to the success of the year ahead, so pull on your warm clothes, grab your tools and get ready.

DIGGING GROUND

Obviously, one of the most important parts of any edible garden is the matter in which you will be growing your fruit and veg. There are a few different schools of thought on this, including digging vs no dig methods, growing green manures, covering empty soil and more. There is no right or wrong answer, it is dependent on what works for you, the type of ground you will be growing in and how much time you have at your disposal.

If you sit firmly in the camp that believes in giving your soil a good dig over, there is



also a number of ways you can do this. Tillers and rotovators are available in a multitude of shapes, sizes and powers, and you can get forks, spades, hoes, trowels and weeders in all different lengths and weights – from small, slight hand tools right through to hefty, long handled ones.

Another factor that will influence your decision is the type of soil you have, whether it be heavy clay, light and sandy or anything in between. Although it may seem tempting to dig grit into the heavier soils, this doesn't actually have much of an affect without the quantities being extremely large – far better is the practice of digging in plenty of organic matter, such as manure, or bark that has broken down. Sandy soils will also benefit from the addition of a well-rotted, moisture retentive organic matter being dug in, such as leaf mould or your very own garden compost.

TOOLS, TRAYS AND FLEECES

Your inventory of tools, trays, pots and canes may well have been done as you cleared your plot, but sometimes when rain is pouring and winds are blowing, it seemed a lot easier just to bung everything in your shed and make a dash for home and a nice, hot cup of tea. If this was the case, you are likely now faced with hoes caked in dried mud, pots filled with cobwebs and (probably) snail shells and a tangle of canes, with little idea of what will be usable in the coming months. This is the perfect excuse to pull everything out – wipe down tools and assess them for any damage or disrepair, clean pots and cloches with warm soapy water to wash away any lingering pests or diseases, check over plant supports and make a note of anything that needs to be replaced. Also have a look at any fleece or netting you have in your shed and check it for rips or holes.

CHOOSE YOUR SEEDS

Undeniably one of the most enjoyable parts of the growing season is taking stock of the seeds you own and going through catalogues to find new varieties you would like to try. It is worth assessing what worked well for you in the previous year, what you did and didn't enjoy, and anything your allotment neighbours were growing that particularly piqued your interest. When ordering seeds, remember to keep in mind the space you have to grow, the amount of time and care certain plants need and (this may sound obvious) what you like to eat. Making sure your choices tick

these boxes means you don't run the risk of many unopened seed packets remaining in your stash for years, bought on a whim.

PRUNE TREES AND BUSHES

This is a job that many gardeners are apprehensive of, but it is an important part of plot preparation to help keep fruit trees and bushes producing healthy growth and bumper harvests. Don't be afraid to ask more seasoned growers for advice! Also, there are plenty of hints and tips to be found online – our forum (which can be found at growfruitandveg.co.uk) is home to many helpful, friendly gardeners more than willing to share their own personal techniques on this, and much more. Before getting started, make sure you have the appropriate kit – a sharp pair of secateurs and pruning saw are a must. Sharp tools minimise the chance of damaging the plant as you work. Also, a ladder is always useful for getting to those higher branches safely.



GREAT TOOLS TO HELP PREPARE YOUR PLOT

Chase organic seaweed meal

This slow-acting, long lasting plant food is rich in trace elements that condition soil and help to build up the structure. It should be applied to the surface and lightly raked in up to three months prior to planting. By this time it will have been adequately broken down by the soil bacteria, giving the ground a boost in preparation for the growing season ahead. It's also an excellent lawn food giving strong growth and rich colour. This product is organic and animal free, too.



The Organic Gardening Catalogue
01932 878 570, organiccatalogue.com

Vigo Presses tripod ladder



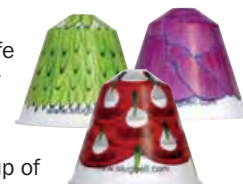
These light aluminium ladders are suitable for all types of orchard work, giving access right into the crown of fruit trees. They are ideal for pruning and harvesting fruit, and have one adjustable leg for level and stable steps on moderately uneven or sloping terrain. The top rail offers one-handed support whilst working, or for leaning

against. Wide, clawed feet are designed to grab soft ground and so prevent slipping or sudden sinking. It is incredibly light for ease of carriage and storage. The safe working load is 100kg.

Vigo Presses 01404 890 093,
vigopresses.co.uk

Slug bell

The Slug Bell is a child, pet and wildlife safe addition to any growing space, as it prevents the accidental picking up of any poison pellets that may be used in some gardens. It is not affected by watering, and is rain proof, too. With an attractive flower pattern, it blends with its surroundings. The whole slug bell can be moved around the garden, and you don't have to keep a constant eye on it, so you can go on holiday and come back to a slug and snail free garden.



Slug Bell 01932 221 501, slugbell.com

 ONE COAT ONLY HS **PLUS** 

TWICE AS MUCH COVERAGE - WITH ONLY ONE COAT REQUIRED!



- > Eco friendly for animals and plant
- > Weather, dirt and UV resistant
- > Microporous, does not peel or blister
- > High coverage, 24m² per litre
- > Ideal for children's play sets and garden furniture



Safe for humans, animals and plants (when dry)



01296 481220
www.osmouk.com

For Growers & Gardeners **UP TO 30% OFF ONLINE**

FREE CATALOGUE

FROM THE UK'S LEADING MANUFACTURER OF
Greenhouse Heaters, Thermostats & Grow Lights

Our latest colour catalogue for Professionals & Amateurs features:

- Heaters • Thermostats • Heated Trays •
- Thermometers • Large Cell UV Insulation and Fixings •
- LED Grow Lights • Soil Warming Cables & more •

CALL NOW! **01796 482 128**

OR SHOP AT WWW.**SimplyControl.co.uk**


Simply Control (246SC),
5 Sawmill Yard, Blair Atholl, PH18 5TL

ALWAYS QUOTE CODE **246SC**

SIMPLY CONTROL

AWARDED 5 STARS IN THE TIMES GREENHOUSE HEATER SURVEY

SUPERIOR GIFTS FOR
Christmas



10% OFF QUOTE FFPAGYO9



- Festive decoration • Sneeboer® tools
- Food & drink gift sets • Basket gift sets
- Practical gardening gifts

Harrod
HORTICULTURAL

DESIGN & MANUFACTURE SINCE 1954

Call 0333 400 1500 (local rate)
Visit www.harrodhorticultural.com

AUBERGINE AT A GLANCE

Sow: January-April

Harvest: August-October



Top growing tips for your FREE SEEDS

Useful advice to help you get the best harvests from your
'Black Beauty' aubergines

Aubergines are a firm favourite with gardeners from all over the UK, and new cultivars that are specially adapted to the British climate have made this crop a strong contender for space on any plot. This guide will focus on tips for caring for your 'Black Beauty' plants once you've sown the free seeds included in this issue (digital copies excluded).

'Black Beauty' often produces a high number of large purple fruits which can be included in a range of Mediterranean dishes. Depending on weather conditions, each plant will provide up to five aubergines, and so just a couple of plants have the potential to keep you in veg throughout the season.

CREATING IDEAL CONDITIONS

This veg is versatile and can be grown under cover or outside. However, for the best yields a greenhouse or polytunnel is perfect as they can provide the warmth that aubergines need to thrive. Keep in mind that this crop can

reach 120cm tall, so allow plenty of space in your final growing spot. It's important to remember that plants outside on the plot will start cropping later in the year and produce smaller fruits due to the cooler temperatures.

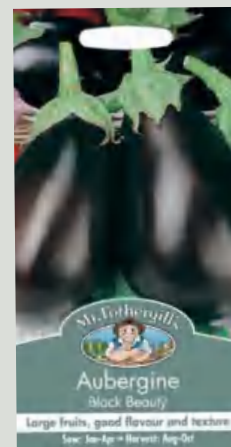
These edibles are as greedy as they are productive, so you'll need to keep a close eye on the soil. Make sure the ground is kept constantly moist and feed the crops with a high-potash fertiliser (such as tomato feed) on a fortnightly basis once the first flowers have set, which usually happens around August. As the fruits become larger, you'll also need to stake your edibles for extra support to deal with the increasing weight. Even though it seems an eternity away right now, another important task is to damp down greenhouse pathways during hot summer days if you're growing aubergines under cover. This will help to increase the humidity of the atmosphere which encourages the development of strong and healthy yields.

Pests to watch out for

The sappy leaves that aubergine plants produce makes them a target for aphids and whitefly. Check the underside of young foliage regularly for these small insects, which come in a variety of colours including white, green, black and yellow. You may also notice a sticky substance that they create. If you spot an infestation, squash these pests with your fingers, or spray affected areas with garlic-infused water to keep them at bay. This shouldn't cause major damage to your crops if controlled, and yields will still be edible.

Red spider mite can also become a threat if conditions are hot and dry. To prevent this insect from taking over, remember to mist your crops regularly. However, if you spot a mottled pattern on the leaves or fine silk

webbing on your plants then you may already have a problem. For an organic solution, introduce the biocontrol predatory mite, which is a bug that can be purchased online.



**Turn over for
step-by-step
sowing guide**

THE YEAR-ROUND POTAGER

Aubergines

Sow your seeds now and enjoy bountiful harvests of these glossy fruits in summer



Despite a reputation for being tricky to grow, aubergines are a great addition to your plot. With their beautiful, shiny skins that range in colour from deep purple to striped and even creamy white, they look attractive on the allotment, and bring a delicious, rich taste to a whole multitude of different meals.

Aubergines can be grown outside in milder climates, but these plants thrive particularly well under cover in a greenhouse or polytunnel – especially if your area is prone to inclement weather. You will need to tie the plants in, as the heavy fruits can cause the stems to bend and even break. They will also need regular watering and feeding in order to thrive – however, the resulting harvests are more than worth the effort!

Remember to keep an eye out for aphids and whitefly, which are sap-sucking insects that will target the leaves and young buds of your crops. Squash them on sight and check plants regularly to keep on top of infestations.

Follow these simple steps and impress your allotment neighbours with the addition of this versatile vegetable to your plot.

1



Prepare small pots or modules by filling them with a good quality potting compost and gently levelling this out. Finely scatter your seeds over the surface of the compost – two or three per cell is ideal, or slightly more if using a pot.

2



Next you need to carefully cover the seeds over with a thin layer of your chosen compost or vermiculite if you have some in your potting shed. This should be at a depth of around 0.5cm for the best results.

3



Water the seeds in gently. Be sure not to waterlog the pots, but at the same time make sure they get a good drink. Place them in either a greenhouse or propagator, which give ideal temperatures for germination.

4



Label the pot with the variety you are growing. This helps eliminate confusion when lots of different crops are at the seedling stage and allows you to give the appropriate care to each of your plants.

5



Seedlings should start to appear in approximately a week, at which point you should remove the pots or trays from your propagator and place them on a windowsill where the young plants can continue to establish.

6



Once your seedlings reach a height of about 2cm, it is time to pot them on. Gently loosen the compost around the plants and tease them out – remembering to always hold on to a leaf rather than the stem.

7



Place each seedling into an individual pot or cell of multipurpose compost. Firm down gently and water in well. Place the pot on a bright windowsill or under glass in a greenhouse or polytunnel to provide continued protection.

8



Plants are able to be moved to their final spots once all risk of frost has passed – this is usually around May time (but do keep an eye on your local forecast, particularly if your area is susceptible to inclement weather).

9



Water the plants well. If you are unable to plant outside, or want to keep your plants under cover, a five litre pot should do the trick – and these can remain under cover in a greenhouse or polytunnel if preferred.

10



As your plants grow on, they will need staking for support and will require regular watering. When flowers start to appear, make sure you feed the plant each week with a high-potash liquid feed. Tomato fertiliser works well for this.



TOP tips

- Pinching out the growing tip of your aubergine plant will encourage thicker lateral growth. This also means that your plant doesn't get too top heavy, which is a common problem with this particular crop. Restricting the amount of fruits setting by pinching out the flowers after approximately five fruits have set is also a good idea, as this will prevent the plant becoming weighed down, and will allow all of the available energy to be put into fully ripening the existing fruits.
- Generally, aubergines will be ready for harvesting after around 20 weeks, although there are some indicators you can use as to when they are ripe as well. Fruits that are plump and shiny are generally ready to be picked, but this can vary between varieties, as some will have less obviously glossy skins than others.
- Pick your aubergines when you are ready to use them, as they do not store well. You can place them in the fridge, which will extend their life a little bit, but in general it is best to use them as soon after harvesting as you can. However, if you do end up with a glut you're struggling to use up, the best course of action is to cook the fruits into sauces and soups, which can be very successfully frozen and used at a later date.



Garden Organic masterclass

HERITAGE VARIETIES



Take a step back in time with **Judith Conroy** as she looks at seeds with history and why you should be growing them



Heritage vegetables are so-called because they have often been grown for many generations and can have rather fascinating histories. The importance of these varieties lies in the fact that they are produced through open pollination. Many modern crops are F1 hybrids – the first generation crosses of two distinctly different, inbred varieties. They tend to have traits which are desirable in large scale production such as uniformity, simultaneous ripening or ability to cope with a particular disease. Seed saved from F1 fruit and vegetables will not come true to type (or may even be sterile) so fresh seed has to be bought each year.

Open-pollinated varieties are different. Seed can be saved year after year and will bear its parents' characteristics. There is a lot of genetic diversity within a population which means these types are very adaptable to environmental conditions and tend to have a broader ability to cope with pests and diseases than others. Gardeners have saved seed and developed vegetable varieties for thousands of years but it has become much neglected in recent history, despite being just as much a part of the growing process as the sowing and harvesting elements.

THE HERITAGE SEED LIBRARY

During the 1970s many seed catalogues reduced the number of cultivars offered for sale when new legislation meant that each variety had to be registered on a national list at considerable expense. Garden Organic's founder Lawrence D. Hills identified this threat and established the Heritage Seed Library to conserve the important genetic diversity of food crops. The library is a living collection (not a seed bank) and each variety is grown as often as possible to produce fresh seed with new varieties added as they are discovered (or, in fact rediscovered).

GROWING OPEN POLLINATED CROPS

- Seek out varieties that are not labelled 'F1' – many seed suppliers offer both F1 and open pollinated seeds. There is also an 'open-pollinated seeds' logo that is increasingly used. Look out for smaller companies specialising in this such as Real Seeds. Garden Organic members can join the Heritage Seed Library to support their work and access seed.
- Start saving your own seed – there are books and courses available on the topic. Try this out with annual crops such as peas, beans and tomatoes. As you find out more, progress onto biennials like carrots and brassicas.
- Try growing varieties that originated in your local area (often – but not always – given away by the name). You may find that they are particularly suited to your soil or other local conditions.
- Open pollinated varieties carry wide genetic diversity and can readily adapt to local conditions. It is possible to develop a crop to suit your microclimate or personal preferences by saving seed from the plants that have the qualities you value most – those that have done best on your plot, taste better, stay small, grow larger etc.

Useful links

- The Heritage Seed Library
gardenorganic.org.uk/hsl
- Open Pollinated Seed
open-pollinated-seeds.org.uk



GYO says

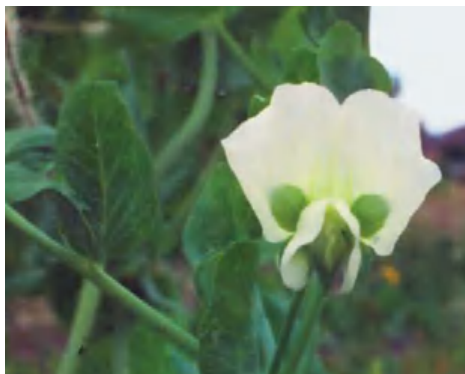
Why not try to save your own seed and preserve your own garden heritage? This can be very simply done and can help you to produce crops that are already used to your local conditions. In theory, this helps make each new generation of vegetables stronger and more fruitful than the last. However, do be aware that some varieties are liable to crossing with other plants of the same type

but a different variety. The experimentation can be fun, but if you are looking to keep strains pure, be sure to do some research into your specific crops and how to prevent this crossing.

Here is a brief list of some of the best seeds to save on your plot:

- Chilli peppers ● Tomatoes ● Beans
- Peas ● Radishes ● Carrots ● Kale
- Courgettes (and other squashes)

VEGETABLES IN THE COLLECTION INCLUDE:



● Pea '**Hugh's Huge**'. Like many older peas this tall plant produces a crop over a long season unlike many F1 hybrids which ripen all at once resulting in a glut. Thought to be at least 80 years old, it was given to HSL donor Mr Kemp by Hugh Cutting, a representative of the local water authority in the 1980s, who acquired seed while undertaking a well survey.



● Tomato '**Sub Arctic Plenty**'. Offered by Thompson and Morgan in the 1970s and sent to the Heritage Seed Library by Mrs Hutchings of Warminster. An early variety that will set fruit in colder conditions, developed in the 1940s to provide the US Air Force stationed in Greenland with fresh tomatoes.



● Broad bean '**Crimson Flowered**'. Thought to date back to at least 1778 this variety was lost until 1978 when 73 year old Rhoda Cutbush donated seeds to the Heritage Seed Library. This plant that lives up to its name has been used to promote the work of the seed library, is on the national list and back in seed catalogues.



BUYING SEEDS FOR THE YEAR AHEAD

Useful information to help you choose the best varieties for your plot

January is a busy time for gardeners, there's plans to be made and seeds to be sown, but it's best not to rush into decisions when it comes to choosing this year's crops. Before you make that commitment and purchase your seed supply for the forthcoming season, take the time to consider which types will be most suited to your growing space.

WHAT DIFFERENCE DO VARIETIES MAKE?

You may have a clear vision about what edibles you'd like to grow this year, but it's a good idea to consider what suits you best.

For example, if you're short on space and want to grow in containers, dwarf varieties will be ideal. If previous efforts have fallen victim to fungal diseases, look out for packets that outline a resistance to these problems. F1 hybrids are the result of cross-pollinating different variations of the same veg in order to create a plant that possesses the good qualities of each parent – for example, high-yielding and early crop production. However, if you want to keep things traditional on the plot, try heritage varieties which have been relied upon for generations due to particularly desirable qualities, such as great flavour. Turn to page 30 for more information on this.





CONDITIONS

If you're unsure what type of soil you have, tester kits are available to buy online or at many good garden centres. This piece of equipment will tell you the pH balance of the earth – a neutral reading of about six or seven is ideal and will be suitable for the majority of crops. Anything below these numbers show that the ground is acidic, and a dosage of sulphur or ferrous sulphate will need to be added. A recording above the ideal measurements is alkaline which will require you to add lime.

If you're a fan of under cover growing, polytunnels can create high levels of humidity, especially in the summer. This is perfect for crops such as melons and chillies, but edibles that are susceptible to fungal diseases like tomatoes may develop problems in this space. For this reason, you'll need to carefully plan how many seeds to buy, as squeezing plants into unsuitable spaces could result in poor yields and plant losses.

STORING YOUR SEEDS

If you have any packets leftover, remember to keep an eye on their expiration date as the chance of success is significantly reduced if the seeds are sown past this time. They should be kept in a cool, dry, dark space – storage tins are available to purchase online that will provide these conditions, but a makeshift cardboard box will also be fine if kept in an appropriate place.

Different seeds will have varying shelf lives, cucumbers and tomatoes are among



some of the more reliable examples, and can last up to 10 years. Beetroot, chard and carrots will expire within two to three years and parsnips within one. The amount of veg you plan to grow should come into this consideration, as it's best to avoid buying a large packet of a short-lived variety if you won't make good use of them. Buy just enough for the season ahead and replenish this each year to give yourself a high success rate and reduce the risk of unnecessary disappointment this season. If you do find yourself with excess seeds, you can always swap and share with plot neighbours.

EXOTICS

Being able to grow fruit and veg from foreign lands is an exciting prospect that many gardeners relish. However, before you pay out for seeds that can be expensive, remember to do some research beforehand. Edibles from warmer climates aren't likely to flourish in the unpredictable British weather. These varieties often need a sheltered spot with increased humidity, which can be achieved with a polytunnel or heated greenhouse. If you don't have to room for either of these, it might be best to stick to the more traditional crops.

GROWING IN POTS

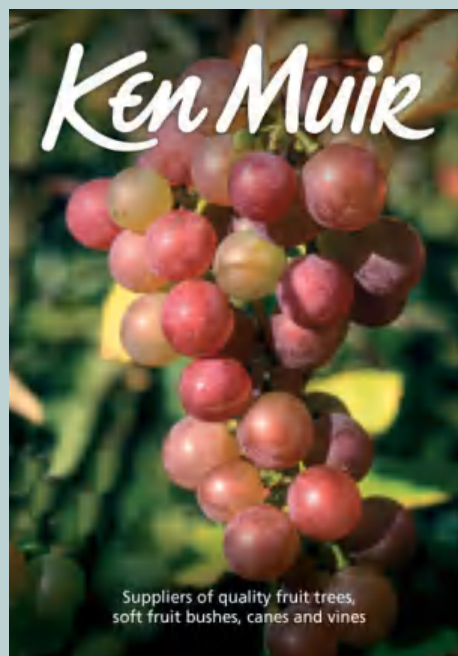
Dwarf varieties are ideal for these conditions as they don't need an expansive root system to be productive. Try aubergine 'Pinstripe' or broad bean 'Robin Hood'. Keep the soil constantly moist as containers can only hold a limited amount of water and will dehydrate quickly. Depending on the needs of the plant, you might also be required to feed your edibles on a weekly or fortnightly basis. It's important to remember that these types will produce smaller yields, and so might not be suitable for growers looking for show-worthy veg.





D.T. BROWN SEEDS

Request your free, new season catalogue from the seed experts at D.T. Brown Seeds. At nearly 200 pages, it's the most comprehensive offering of vegetable seeds and plants, potatoes, onion sets, fruit and flowers across the UK. All seeds orders come with a free trial packet of seeds and labels. To request your catalogue call 0845 371 0532 or visit dtbrownseeds.co.uk



KEN MUIR

With over 50 years experience, Ken Muir prides itself on providing only the highest quality fruit trees, soft fruits, canes and vines. Essential information is included with each purchase to ensure every grower has success with their plants. Order your catalogue now by calling 01255 830 181 or go online at kenmuir.co.uk to find out more.



CJ WILDLIFE

CJ Wildlife have published their first wildlife guide, featuring a selection of their best-selling products to help you care for your garden wildlife. To request your free copy, call 0800 731 2820 or visit the website birdfood.co.uk/wildlifeguide

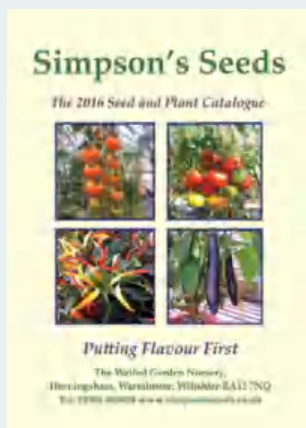


MR FOTHERGILL'S SEEDS

With one of the UK's largest seed ranges, Mr Fothergill's is a trusted name among British gardeners. Special offers include two packets of seed free with every seed order and save up to 20 per cent on all seeds when you buy five packets. To request your catalogue, call 0845 371 0518 or visit mr-fothergills.co.uk

SIMPSON'S SEEDS

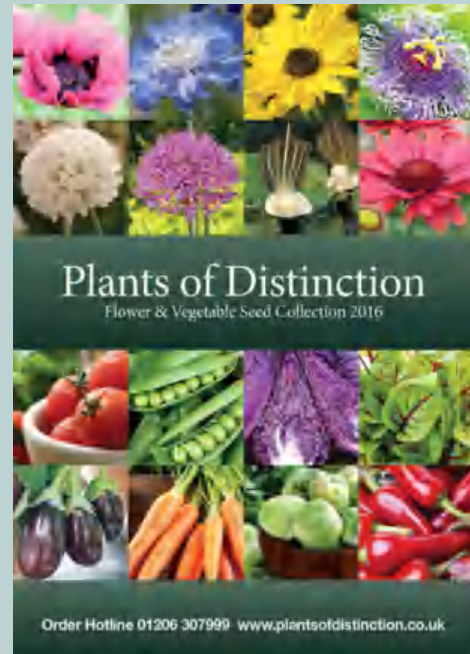
From the mildest chillies to the nation's hottest, tomatoes bursting with flavour to crisp salad leaves and root veg, Simpsons Seeds has produced an exciting seed and plant catalogue for the UK grower. This will help you to make excellent crop choices for the season. To request a copy, phone 01985 845 004 or visit simpsonseeds.co.uk





MARSHALLS

The Marshall's 2016 catalogue will be launching in January and it's got plenty to offer growers. The content is packed with great products, and the benefit of free fertiliser with every seed order. There's a huge range to choose from, including vegetable seeds and fruit trees. To get a copy of the catalogue, call Marshall's Seeds today on 0844 557 6788 or visit marshall's-seeds.co.uk



PLANTS OF DISTINCTION

The Plants of Distinction Catalogue contains an exciting collection of flower and vegetable seeds, including favourite varieties from years gone by as well as the latest introductions from breeders worldwide. For the kitchen gardener, there is a fabulous selection of vegetable varieties. To request your free copy of the catalogue, call 01206 307 999 or visit plantsofdistinction.co.uk



TWO WESTS & ELLIOTT

This year's Two West's & Elliott catalogue is packed with everything you need for your greenhouse and garden, including propagators, plant supports, ventilation, cloches, watering equipment, shading, heaters, raised beds and more. Call 01246 451 077 to order your free catalogue or visit twowests.co.uk to find out more about this range.

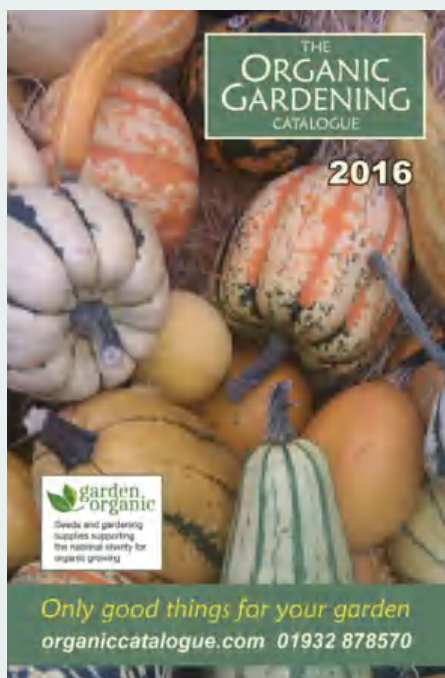
PREMIER POLYTUNNELS

Premier Polytunnels have 30 years experience in the design and development of polytunnels. This allows for the production of high quality, strong, reliable products at an affordable price, backed up by the very best customer service. Call for a free brochure on 01282 811 250 or visit premierpolytunnels.co.uk



THE MAMMOTH ONIONS

Robinson's Mammoth Vegetable Seeds was established in 1860 and specialises in vegetables which taste as good as they look. New and exclusive for 2016 are the sets of the French heritage onion variety 'Rose of Roscoff'. The company has been relied upon by keen exhibitors for over 100 years. To order a copy of the catalogue call 01524 791 210 or go to mammothonion.co.uk



ORGANIC GARDENING CATALOGUE

The Organic Gardening Catalogue offers a comprehensive range of seeds and gardening supplies, with all purchases helping to support Garden Organic, which is the national charity for organic growing. With over 50 new varieties for 2016, highlights include carrot 'Cosmic Purple' and gherkin 'Salt and Pepper'. Call 01932 878 570 for your free copy or visit organiccatalogue.com

SUTTONS CATALOGUE

Suttons 2016 seed catalogue includes over 100 new varieties of vegetable and flower seeds. Try James Wong's new 'Grow for Flavour' selection or support Cancer Research UK with their new special range. Proud recipients of the Royal Warrant since 1871. For more information call 0844 326 2200 or visit suttons.co.uk



DOBIES CATALOGUE

This year Rob Smith, winner of the BBC Big Allotment Challenge, has joined Dobies of Devon with a special range of heritage veg, specially chosen for their good looks and incredible taste. Rated 5 star for value by Which? For more information call 0844 967 0303 or visit dobies.co.uk



SEEDS OF ITALY

Franchi are a seven-generation family business that has been selling seeds since 1783 to provide crops with provenance and flavour. The company is based in Bergamo, Italy, which has the same amount of rain as Cardiff. The Franchi brand has been approved by The Slow Food and Vegetarian Society. Go to seedsofitaly.com or call 020 8427 5020.

WALCOT NURSERY

The catalogue from Walcot Nursery describes the wide selection of organic fruit trees, such as apples, plums, pears, cherries and quinces available to buy by post, phone and online – this also includes well-established varieties and recent introductions. Order your copy by post, by calling 01905 841 587, or online at walcotnursery.co.uk



BUCKINGHAM NURSERIES

The Buckingham Nurseries website is well visited and customers relish the information and photographs. However, the good old-fashioned catalogue is still very well loved, especially by those with a log fire to sit in front of when browsing through it. It has 34 pages packed with information on hedging, trees, top fruit, soft fruit, Japanese acers and ground cover plants, so apply for your free copy by calling 01280 827 925 or visit hedging.co.uk

Pick of the crop

GARDEN DIARIES AND JOURNALS

Stay on top of key tasks this season with these great products

SARAH RAVEN DIARY
2016 (£12.95) Sarah Raven
 03450 920 283, sarahraven.com



GARDEN JOURNAL
(£14.99)
 Home and Garden Centre,
homeandgardencentre.co.uk



SOPHIE CONRAN
GARDENER'S
JOURNAL (£14.95)
 Burgon and Ball 01142 338
 262, burgonandball.com



RHS PLANT
NOTEBOOK (£7.99)
 RHS shop 01483 211 320,
rhsshop.co.uk



GARDENERS JOURNAL
GIFT SET (£14.95)
 Garden Divas 01462 421 836,
gardendivas.co.uk

Turn up the HEAT

Give your plants the protection they need with this in-depth guide to propagators from garden author **Louise Curley**

At this time of year we're bombarded with catalogues offering us a plethora of gadgets for the garden. Most of us don't have the space to store even a handful of the products on the market so selecting those that really are useful is key. When I bought my heated windowsill propagator a few years ago I did wonder whether it would be just another item taking up valuable space



in the house, would it eventually become the gardening equivalent of the juicer gathering dust in a cupboard? I couldn't have been more wrong as it is now an essential piece of my gardening kit. I bought it primarily to get a head start with my spring seed sowing but as I've discovered, it has proved useful in others ways, too.

EARLY SEED SOWING

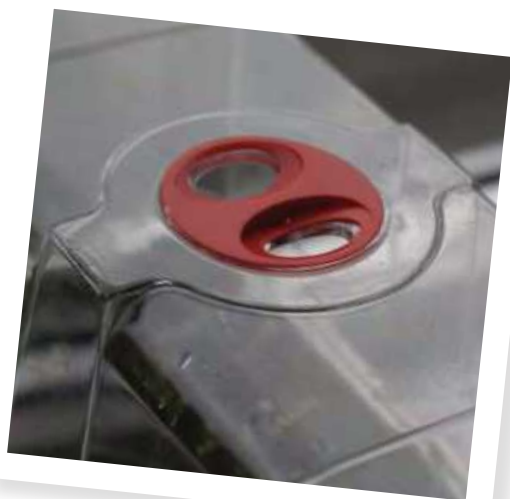
Heated propagators come into their own in late winter and spring when the extra warmth will help seeds to germinate, allowing you to extend your growing season. Some crops – tender plants from warmer climates such as chillies, aubergines and peppers – need a minimum temperature of 16°C in order to germinate, although the optimum temperature for aubergines, for example, is 24-32°C. They also need a long growing season so that they have time to ripen before autumn arrives. This means these seeds need to be started off early, in February or March, not the warmest time of the year which is where the extra heat comes in useful.

Many crops will germinate at much lower temperatures, lettuce, for instance, will sprout at only 2°C but most seeds will germinate more quickly in warmer conditions. Use your heated propagator if you want to grow microgreens on your windowsill or in an unheated greenhouse. Sow batches every month from October to February and you'll have a regular supply of micro leaves.

Even if you can provide extra heat, light levels are still low at the beginning of the year. Plants need water, light, CO² and heat to grow, if any of these factors are too low they will impact on growth. Heat without enough light can produce weak and spindly seedlings, so it's important to not sow too early. It's also worth considering whether you have enough space to grow on your young plants until they can happily survive outdoors.

EXTRA USES

If you want to propagate your edible plants from cuttings then a heated propagator will come in useful for this, too. They are also ideal for rooting cuttings of dahlias and



GYO says

- Choose the largest product you can afford and accommodate
- The position you choose needs to have plenty of natural light for the plants
- Measure the space to make sure it fits and check the cable will reach to the nearest power point
- Take care on sunny windowsills that plants inside don't cook
- Switch your propagator on a day or two before you want to start sowing to allow it to get up to temperature
- When seeds have germinated open the vents to allow moisture to escape to prevent fungal diseases forming. Prick out as soon as seedlings are big enough to handle



chrysanthemums – classic allotment flowers. Heat around the base of a cutting encourages new roots to form. Speeding up this process will make your propagation attempts more successful, as these can fail because they rot before roots have the chance to develop.

Not all seeds need extra heat to germinate but those left to sit in cold, damp compost can rot before they've been able to spring into life. Compost in early spring will feel cold to touch, and even seeds which don't need extra heat to grow won't find this a welcoming environment. You can use your heated propagator to warm up the matter for a day or so before sowing, then if the seeds don't need extra heat to germinate, simply remove the tray and place on a windowsill or potting bench and sow as usual.

DIFFERENT PROPAGATORS

There are a range of heated propagators to choose from depending on your available space and what you want to grow. So which types work well for which tasks in the garden? And which will most suit your growing needs?

Fixed temperature base propagators have a thermostat fitted within the watertight base and are designed to keep the temperature at 19°C – optimum for most crops.

Windowsill propagators are perfect if space is tight. These tend to heat the base to 8°C above the room temperature, which is sufficient for most seeds. The temperature will fluctuate with sunshine and lower ambient night-time temperatures.

Thermostatically controlled propagators allow you to set any temperature between 5-30°C. Some versions allow you to add extra layers to give more height in the growing space – great if you want to take cuttings which need taller lids.

Heated cloches come with a heated mat base and a cloche construction over the top to maintain both heat and moisture levels. The extra height is useful and panels in the cloche make for easy access and provide ventilation, which minimises the risk of fungal diseases. This type is perfect for keeping on the potting bench.

Warming pads are the simplest type and are perfect if you're short on space – to store simply roll it up. It will lift the temperature by 11°C. Remove trays and pots from the mat before watering, then place them back once drained. They come in different sizes and with some models it's possible to add a thermostat.

Heat mats are ideal for a greenhouse or polytunnel. They can be rolled up to store, and are a simple and cost effective way to heat a bench, if you want to overwinter tender plants in an unheated greenhouse. They come with soil sensors and a thermostat. Place something underneath to aid insulation such as polystyrene.

Dew point growing cabinets are a self-contained unit. To combat low light levels there are daylight bulbs in the hood, the temperature is controlled and air is pumped into water held in the reservoir to create the dew point – just the right amount of humidity for seedlings and cuttings to thrive. It's fully automatic, too.



Plot essentials

This month's jobs on the vegetable patch and patio

Words by: **Sally Nex**

GROWING TECHNIQUE

Heeling in leeks

In the depths of winter it can take considerable willpower to trudge through the snow and ice to gather in your harvest. What's even worse is when you get there and the ground is too frozen, as you'll have real difficulties digging up crops anchored in the soil like leeks – so you may end up coming home empty-handed.

Lifting a good part of your crop to heel in while the weather is mild gets around both problems nicely. Choose a sheltered spot near the house, then dig a trench about 30cm deep. Lift your leeks wholesale with as much root intact as possible and stand them in the trench, quite close together, so they're half-in and half-out. Back-fill loosely with soil and they'll happily stay like that for some months. All you have to do is reach outside to pull your yields as you need them, whatever the weather.



Don't forget CHECK ANTI-PIGEON NETTING

Holes appear in netting overnight, and this covering can come loose. Make sure it's kept taut at all times, check that wildlife isn't tangled in the material and create a windbreak to prevent severe wind damage.

**“LATE JANUARY IS
IDEAL TO PLANT
BEAN CROPS”**

MINI PROJECT: PLANT OUT OVERWINTERED BROAD BEANS

30
min

- Sowing tough, hardy varieties of broad beans like 'Aquadulce Claudia' in autumn to overwinter as seedlings in the cold frame makes sense. You get your harvest at least a month earlier, but you also get the job out of the way while you're less busy. It's also useful for avoiding most of the problems which can beset spring-sown crops, too. They're already producing yields before the blackfly are out of bed, and your plants are picked and out of the ground too early for the nasty fungal disease chocolate spot to even get a look-in.

- They do tend to get leggy if you leave them in pots too far into the spring, though, so get them out of their modules and in the ground early. As long as the weather isn't too bad and the earth is workable, late January or early February is ideal to plant bean crops, 10cm apart into well-drained soil. A cloche over the top keeps off the worst of the late-winter weather, but remember to remove it once they hit the top. They'll also need a little support, so build a framework of short canes around the row to prevent them flopping sideways. You can expect to crack open your first pods of tender baby beans by late May.



*How to avoid***SOIL PANS**

Your soil is a delicate balance of air, water and particles of clay, sand or silt, all designed to give your plants a perfect environment in which to grow. Unfortunately it's all too vulnerable to attack from clumsy feet, lashing winter rain or baking sunshine beating out the air and hammering it into a hard pan, impossible for roots, water or your garden fork to break through.

Cover empty veg beds with a thick mulch of well-rotted organic matter topped with black plastic or thick cardboard to keep off excess rain. Avoid treading on the soil by growing in raised beds that will help you work from the paths. Make sure your mulches are maintained so the surface stays damp, cool and fluffy as a well-filled eiderdown.

**Eat your violas**

You may wonder what on earth bedding plants are doing in GYO mag. But stalwart pansies and winter-flowering violas have earned their place on the veg plot as well as the patio, as they're among the best edible blossoms you can grow.

Pretend you've taken up ornamental gardening by filling generous containers with them and surrounding your front door – they'll flower cheerfully through all but the very coldest months of the year. Then when the neighbours aren't looking, pinch handfuls of colour and delicate, pea-like flavour for your salads and stirfries. They're particularly lovely crystallised on cakes and biscuits.

It's best to sow from seed if you plan to eat your pansies. This method is a great way of raising a large number of plants very cheaply, and you'll avoid any unwanted pesticides and herbicides that might be lurking on shop-bought bedding. For winter-flowering crops, make a note to start them in early summer, so they'll be ready to plant out from autumn onwards. Try pretty little heartsease violet, 'Viola tricolor', cheery bright yellow-and-orange mix 'Citrus Blend' or coppery-brown 'Irish Molly'.

VARIETIES TO TRY*New*

Tomato '**Blue Bayou**' Just when you thought you'd seen it all, what with yellow, black and striped tomatoes – now there's one in navy blue.

This new American-bred cordon variety produces large cherry fruits and has had rave reviews for its savoury, smokily rich flavour. It takes its time ripening, the skin shading through red and purple to deep blue-black in the sunshine, though the flesh stays a deep, crimson. You can tell it's ripe when there's some give in the fruits and the skin turns red again. (chilternseeds.co.uk)

*Heritage*

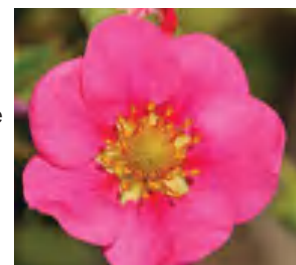
Onion '**The Kelsae**' The go-to variety for exhibition onion growers for over 60 years, it holds a clutch of records and is rarely bettered for size, regularly reaching over 1kg per bulb.

The secret is to sow early – though in practice any time up until February is fine, just keep bulbs warm until April when you can transplant them outdoors. After you've won your awards, you can reward yourself with a feast – unlike many exhibition types this variety makes good eating onions, too. (medwynsofanglesea.co.uk)

*Exotic*

Strawberry '**Toscana**' When space is limited and the same garden has to produce both pretty flowers and food for your plate, plants which have it all are especially valuable.

This little ever-bearing strawberry has lipstick pink flowers which hold their own among perennials. These are followed by delicious fruit right through the season, and there are often blossom and berries on the same plant. They also have a habit of flowering on the runners, making a pretty cascade of pink and scarlet. (mr-fothergills.co.uk)





GROW YOUR OWN SPROUTED FENUGREEK

This is a popular crop which can be easily grown all year on a warm window sill, out of direct sunlight. Sow seeds in a shallow tray on an absorbent layer such as kitchen roll. Keep the tissue moist but not saturated, at a temperature of around 15-18°C. Sprouts should be ready to harvest after a few days when they reach 2cm long. These are ideal as an addition to winter salads or stir-fries and as microgreens. Remember to always use packets sold for sprouting as alternatives may harbour harmful organisms.



Edible exotics: FENUGREEK



RHS trials officer **Karen Robbirt** runs through her top tips for cultivating this delicious crop

This tender annual is easily recognised as a member of the pea family with clover-like trifoliate leaves. It has an upright habit, growing to 60cm and produces white, keeled flowers, followed by long pods containing up to 20 oblong, brown seeds.

Fenugreek herb is the fresh or dried leaves or stems of the crop which have a sweet aroma that is reminiscent of hay. It also makes a good green manure for late summer as it grows fast, supports no vegetable pests and diseases and seed can be brought cheaply from Asian supermarkets. If you're struggling with bacteria-ridden soil, this plant can be used in UK conditions for boosting the earth with extra nitrogen.

The traditional spice is produced from the ripe seeds that have a bitter taste and caramel aroma which intensifies as they are roasted and crushed. It's a staple of many Indian curries and a traditional ingredient in Ethiopian cuisine.

START SOWING

Fenugreek is a half-hardy annual and will not tolerate more than a light frost. Like many legumes it does not like to be disturbed once germinated. It is best to directly sow seeds on the plot in spring once the worst of the cold weather has passed and the minimum ground temperature has reached 15°C.

1. Plants will thrive in well drained, fertile, loamy soil with a roughly neutral pH balance. They will not grow well in heavy clay, and a site in full sun or partial shade is ideal.

2. Direct sow seeds between March and August to a depth of 2cm in rows 40cm apart.

Once the seedlings reach 5cm tall, thin them to allow

10cm between each one.

3. Water regularly, especially during dry spells to avoid bolting and keep the bed weed-free.



Alternatively direct-sow at fortnightly intervals for a supply of young salad leaves through the summer months. For an early crop, try sowing indoors in February using biodegradable pots so that the roots will not be disturbed on planting outside after the last frosts of winter.

CONTINUED CARE

Although it's not particularly ornamental, fenugreek can be grown in pots provided plants are kept well-watered. Common pests that may attack this edible include aphids and thrips. Powdery mildew can cause problems if the crops are stressed, so allow sufficient spacing and irrigation to discourage this fungus from developing.

HARVESTING AND STORAGE

Seeds should be ready for harvesting in autumn within four to five weeks after flowering. Pick the pods before they become brittle and spill the contents. Spread these across a piece of kitchen roll and leave to dry for a few days before storing in an airtight container. Dried seeds can be roasted and crushed to add a bitter-sweet flavour to a range of Asian dishes.

A few fresh leaves will add flavour to salads, soups and sauces. Alternatively, the foliage can be dried and stored.

GYO EXPERTS



**JAMES
COX**

is the head gardener
of the Yeo Valley
Organic Garden



**GUY
BARTER**

is the head of
the RHS
advisory service



**JOSEPH
ATKIN**

is the head gardener
at Aberglasney
Gardens



**PAUL
WILKINSON**

is the head of Living
Landscape and The
Wildlife Trusts



**CHRIS
GROVES**

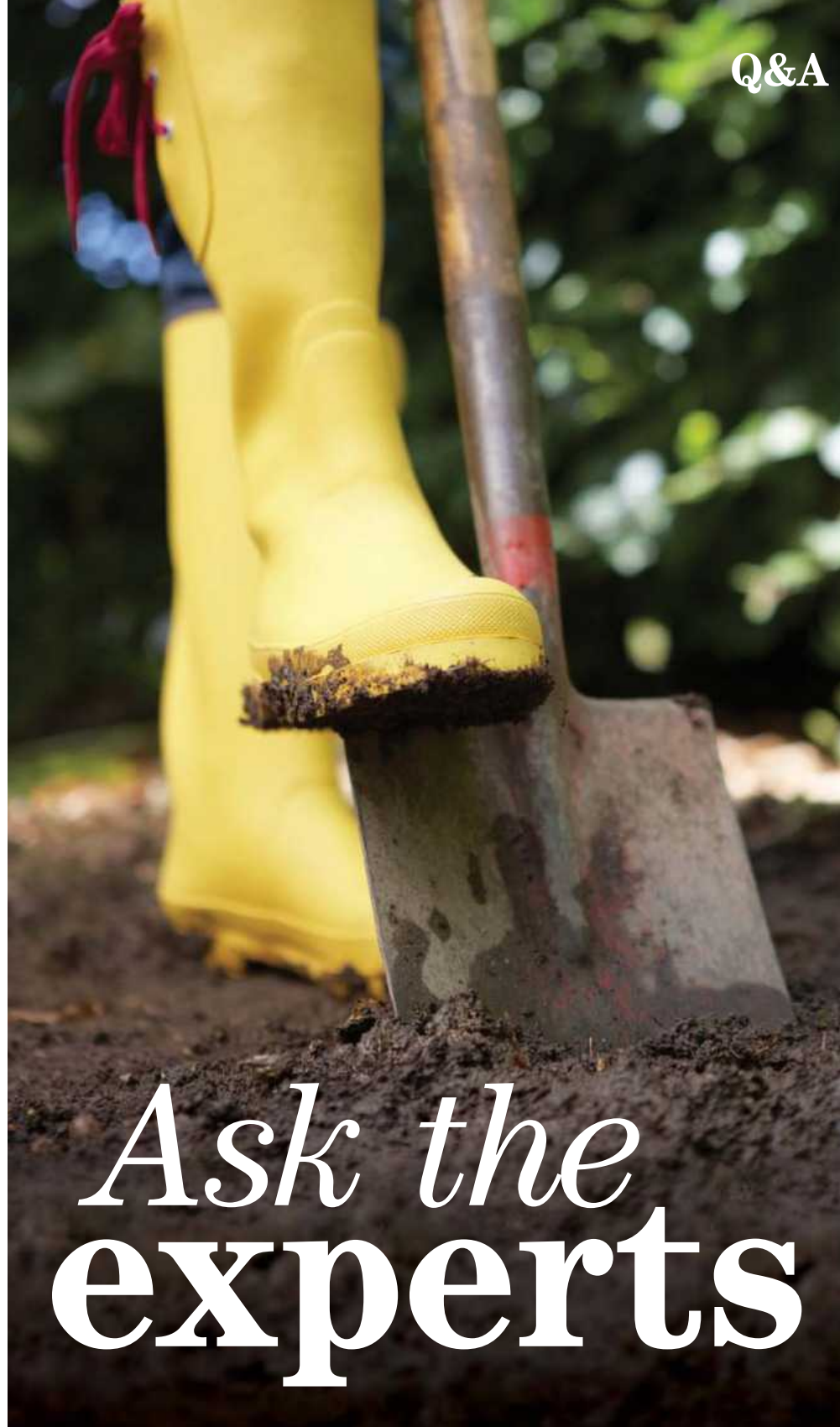
is the senior gardener
at National Trust's
Cotehele Gardens



**SALLY
CUNNINGHAM**

is a horticultural
consultant and
researcher

**“THE BEST POSSIBLE
WAY TO IMPROVE
YOUR SOIL IS TO
INCORPORATE
ORGANIC MATTER”**



SAVE YOUR SOIL

Q I have just taken on a new allotment plot and have been told that the site is prone to waterlogging. Is there anything I can do to improve the soil? **Arnold Lewis, via email**

James says: The best possible way that you can improve your soil is to incorporate organic matter and grit into it. If it's waterlogged then the ground probably has a high clay content which is actually not all bad news. This will be high in nutrients

and adding the organic matter will bind the small clay particles together to form a bigger crumb structure, allowing water movement and oxygen to get to the roots faster. The humus contained in the organic matter will also help the plants with the uptake of nutrients. This is no quick miracle fix, though, and you will have to keep digging this in each year. Whenever you are working on a waterlogged site it is always necessary to try not to walk on it as this will just add to the compaction of the soil even more.

Q My garden has very poor drainage – are there any crops that are more able to cope with these kind of conditions than others? **Debbie Wright, Somerset**

James says: I would advise that you really concentrate on improving the ground conditions as poorly drained soil is not a good starting point for growing. Raised beds will give you the option to grow a much wider range of crops and get you started straight away. This will be far more satisfying than the disappointment of failure due to poor drainage. The new soil and organic matter will be workable and will sit on top of your existing earth. It will warm up quicker in the spring and will be easier to work with as you can plant and harvest from the side of the bed preventing the need to walk on them.

Q I have very fine soil that doesn't hold on to water at all, are there any methods I can use to make this a more hospitable environment for plants? **Jason Parsons, Hertfordshire**

James says: The same applies for fine, sandy soils with the addition of organic matter being the key to improving its condition. The soil particles are large and coarse and allow water to enter quickly into the ground but also to drain away just as quick. The organic matter will help hold onto moisture and stop nutrients from leaching out during the winter months. Repeating this every year.



EARLY SEASON SOWING

Q I am desperate to get sowing those first seeds, but live in quite a cold part of the country. I don't have any under cover growing space, so is there anything I can get away with this early? **Amelia Matthews, Shropshire**

Joseph says: There are a few different options. Cloches are cheap and easy to make – all you need is a few stiff wires and some

polythene (either clear or milky white). Cold frames can also be made with a wooden frame and a clear lid. Either of these should mean you can start sowing up to a month early or in the autumn for different crops. One of the easiest methods is sow your seed as normal and cover with fleece, but also use this material to warm the soil for a few weeks first. Another trick is to use varieties that are very cold hardy e.g. pea 'Meteor', which can be sown at almost any time with protection.



SIMPLE PRUNING ADVICE

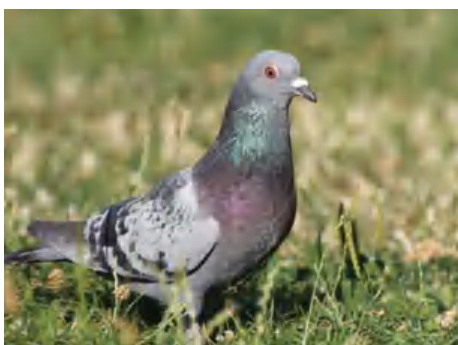
Q My apple tree has a severe case of canker – I hear you can prune this out but don't really know where to start, what would you advise? **Harry Ashwell, Essex**

Guy says: Everything depends on how much canker is present – if there is only a little it is easy enough to prune out the odd shoot. In many cases, however, there is so much that the tree would be very badly reduced if all the infected wood was pruned out – especially if the cankers are on important boughs or even the trunk. Where pruning out would lead to too much reduction of the tree, it is possible to scrape away the worst of it with a sharp knife and then paint the wounded area with a pruning paint. Remember to clean the knife frequently. Unfortunately some cultivars ('Cox's Orange Pippin' and 'James Grieve' for example), are very susceptible, particularly in wet regions. When the condition is at its worst it is best to replace with trees that are more tolerant such as 'Katy' and 'Winston'.

WINTER GROUND CARE

Q There are large portions of my veg plot left empty from my winter harvests and I've heard mixed thoughts on what is the best thing to do with this ground (leave it, cover it, dig it etc) – what would you advise? **Peter Finns, via email**

Chris says: Once your winter veg has been harvested you can prepare the ground for crops that will benefit from being sown in late winter or early spring, such as broad beans, early carrots, beetroot and onions. This can be done by single digging and preparing a seedbed but avoid doing so in frosty or waterlogged conditions. Covering the ground with clear plastic film or cloches for four to six weeks will help to warm the soil before sowing the seed.



WILDLIFE FRIENDLY BIRD CONTROL

Q I am keen to make my plot as wildlife friendly as possible, but also want to discourage birds (particularly pigeons) from my winter brassicas. What is the best way to do this? I was going to net them but feel concerned about creatures becoming tangled in the cover. **Sophia Thomson, Yorkshire**

Paul says: Pigeons can be a problem for those of us growing brassicas such as broccoli, sprouts, cabbage and cauliflower. This is particularly true when frost or snow make other vegetation hard to find. The only certain way of protecting vulnerable plants from the birds is to use netting. To avoid tangling, ensure it's tightly fastened and has no gaps. It should also be highly visible so you might like to consider installing brightly coloured objects – CDs or streamers, for example – to keep unwanted animals at bay.



PROBLEMS TO LOOK OUT FOR IN January

The key issues to look out for this month

COMPACTED SOIL –

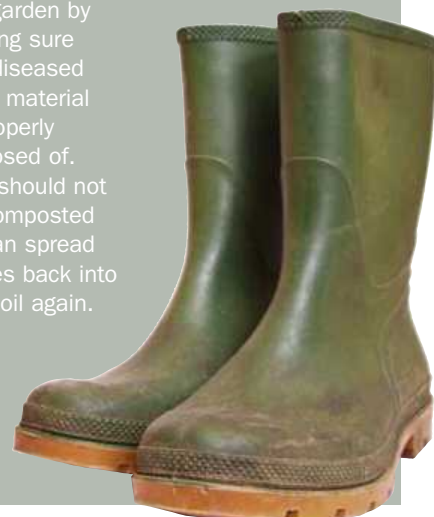
walking on wet soil can make the ground compacted and hard to work with. If you need to tread on your veg beds, lay down a wooden plank and walk on this.

WIND DAMAGE –

ensure trees and bushes are well staked so they don't get blown over and damaged in any inclement winter weather.

OVERWINTERING DISEASES –

avoid problems coming back to your veg garden by making sure any diseased plant material is properly disposed of. This should not be composted as can spread issues back into the soil again.



SLUG AND SNAIL SOLUTIONS

Q Can you offer advice on keeping slugs and snails at bay in an organic way? My infestation was worse than ever last year! **Ron Bennet, Birmingham**

Sally says: Slugs and snails are one of the biggest problems for gardeners, and no single method of control will work all the time. Hand picking on a warm moist evening is quite satisfying! You can either squash them, or relocate them at least 365m from home. If you don't fancy that, pop-bottle cloches or proprietary plastic barriers around young plants are good alternatives, as is copper tape. Encourage natural predators like ground beetles, hedgehogs and amphibians by leaving an area of long grass undisturbed. In addition, predatory nematodes work well in moist soil above 5°C.



WRITE TO US AT...

Ask the Experts, Grow Your Own, 25
Phoenix Court, Hawkins Road, Colchester,
Essex, CO2 8JY

EMAIL...

experts@growfruitandveg.co.uk

OR GO ONLINE...

growfruitandveg.co.uk/grapevine

Here at Grow Your Own we do our best to send a reply to all your gardening questions. Unfortunately the huge numbers of emails and letters we receive mean that a personal response cannot always be guaranteed.

PEST FOCUS: MICE

Protect your crops from the damaging effects of hungry rodents with these useful tips



The New Year is often the catalyst that causes many growers to spring to action, but it's also important to make sure your efforts don't go to waste. Mice are one of the biggest threats to germinating seeds and a number of other crops, so make sure you're prepared if they decide to pay your plot a visit.

Mice remain active all year round, but their numbers are particularly high around spring and autumn. While their population normally remains low and manageable, they will breed quickly if a particular location is suitable, so it's best to monitor any incidents that occur carefully.

SIGNS OF AN INFESTATION

Once you've made your first bean, sweetcorn and pea sowings of the year, remember to keep an eye out for small holes in the soil nearby. This is a sign that mice have buried into the ground to feast on the germinated seedlings. The remains of nibbled young crops may also be visible. If this is a reoccurring problem in your growing space, a solution might be to start seeds off inside and transplant them later in the year, as these rodents aren't interested in more mature plants.

Apple harvests may also be vulnerable as mice can easily find their way into these spaces. Bite marks appear as paired grooves, which are a clear give away. Remember to dispose of any affected yields and move your storage containers to a safe location if possible.

Later on in the year, it's likely that mice will target your strawberry and other soft fruit plants. Frustratingly, these creatures will remove under-ripe berries from their stems and leave them beside the crop. To prevent this, try growing your edibles in hanging baskets and other places that are less accessible.

CONTROL

Traps are an effective method for keeping numbers down, but if you'd like to try non-lethal methods, there are products available from online sources that keep them alive in a small space. However, it's crucial that these containers are checked twice a day, and rodents should be safely moved to another location several miles away to prevent them from returning to your plot. These tiny animals also have many natural predators including owls, foxes, weasels and stoats, so encouraging them to your veg patch will create a natural solution.

January's GROWING HELP

Jane Perrone takes a look at the some brilliant resources for keen gardeners

Visit Jane's personal blog at perrone.blogs.com

BOOK

PRESERVE YOUR PRODUCE

Jam, relish, pickle, curd... there are endless ways to preserve your allotment bounty, but most of us tend to stick to that one tried-and-tested chutney recipe. *The Produce Companion* will inspire you to expand your culinary horizons, turning your home-grown produce into tasty fare you can enjoy at home or give away as gifts. Roasted apricot and cinnamon curd is definitely on my must-make list. *The Produce Companion* by Meredith Kirton and Mandy Sinclair (Hardie Grant, £20)



LOW MAINTENANCE CONTAINER GROWING

Water butts are a wonderful way of saving water on allotments, but have you ever thought of them as potential valuable growing space? Gardener Bjorn Wood did – and the result was his invention, the Buttacup Flow. It's a self-watering planter that securely attaches to the side of your water butt to make a low-maintenance container for trailing tomatoes or nasturtiums. Available for £11.95 from buttacup.co.uk

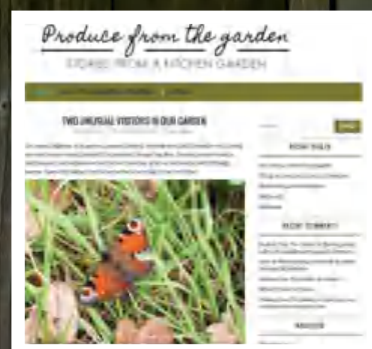
GADGET

BLOG

INSPIRING GARDEN STORIES

Joanne Manser's blog Produce from the Garden is the ongoing story of her ever-changing kitchen garden in the Weald of Kent. From her passion for dahlias to experiments with more unusual crops like tomatilloes, there's plenty here to inspire, and you'll also get to meet her adorable Italian spinone dog Rolo, who she refers to as her 'under-gardener' – I suspect he's more hindrance than help if he's anything like my pooch!

The website can be found at producefromthegarden.co.uk. You can follow Joanne on Twitter at @ProduceFTGarden



SMART GARDENING

The only pages modern gardeners need for brilliant growing

GYO SPOTLIGHT

Those searching for a way to enjoy their favourite crops all year round may soon have a solution thanks to the Grove Ecosystem. The product comes with planter spaces, built-in grow lights and a fish tank to create a productive display where both edibles and aquarium pets can flourish. Once the fish have been fed, they convert the food into waste and healthy bacteria turns it into nitrate, which is an optimal plant fertiliser. The nutrient-rich water then makes its way back down to the tank through pipes. Grove Ecosystem is made from sustainably sourced bamboo and is environmentally-friendly, making it perfect for organic growers who are short on space and time. The engineers behind this creation have surpassed their \$100,000 goal on Kickstarter, and it could become a vital part of modern gardening in years to come.



LET US INTRODUCE YOU TO...

EXTRA SWEET BLACKCURRANTS

Keen fruit growers can enjoy these delicious berries with a little help from Lubera. The company's new blackcurrant 'Blackbells' produces larger fruits with a higher sugar content than many other types, making it a valuable addition to any garden or allotment. An individual shrub in a 5 litre pot costs £15.90 and is available from lubera.co.uk



SWEET CORN SHOOTS

Gardeners looking to experiment with something different should give these tasty crops a try. They need to be grown in total darkness and provide harvests of sweet, yet sour corn-flavoured shoots. A pack of 200 seeds costs £2.99 and can be found at suttons.co.uk

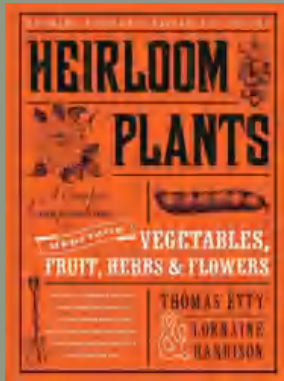


Starting up A TOOL COLLECTION

Itching to do something productive in the garden, but not quite sure what can be done? Sorting out your tool collection is an ideal job for the winter months and you may be able to find any items you are missing in the January sales.

- Before you get carried away with what tools you would love to have in your shed, think honestly about what you need. We would recommend investing in the following as a starting point – a spade, a digging fork, a hand fork and trowel, a hoe, a rake, a pair of secateurs and loppers, a good quality hose and watering can.
- Buy the best tools you can afford. This usually means they will last longer than cheap alternatives and will maintain their efficiency.
- When buying items, it's a good idea if you can go into a shop or garden centre and test out their weight, strength and ease of use.
- Once you have bought your tools, clean them thoroughly after each job and sharpen regularly using a sharpening stone when necessary.





Buy the book!

Growers who enjoy keeping things traditional will love *Heirloom Plants: A Complete Compendium of Heritage Vegetables, Fruit, Herbs & Flowers* by Ray Warner. This book features a collection of lost and some completely forgotten varieties that are available from the author's family website (thomasetty.co.uk). It is published by Ivy Press with an RRP of £18.99 and is available from all good bookshops and online retailers.

RESEARCHERS INVESTIGATE RISING GOLDFINCH NUMBERS

BTO (Bird Trust for Ornithology) has recently discovered a 70 per cent increase in goldfinch numbers compared to data from 20 years ago. The exact reason for this remains a mystery, and because of this the organisation is encouraging growers across the UK to take part in the Goldfinch Feeding Survey to find out how these creatures use resources from gardens. This will help us understand the best ways to assist these birds through tougher times, and encourage their frequent visits in order to take care of pests. To find out more online at bto.org



SMART FACT

Hedgehog numbers are currently declining in the UK at approximately five per cent each year – that's the same rate as tigers around the world

HOT NEWS

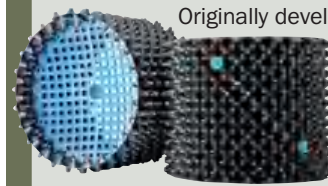
The hedgehog has seen a decline in its populations in recent years, but to put the little creature at the forefront of everyone's minds, Oliver Colville (conservative MP for Sutton and Devonport) has suggested that the hedgehog should become the national symbol of the UK in place of the lion. It's believed this campaign might encourage members of the public to support this native creature. However, the suitability of the hedgehog has been contested by others due to its timid nature and sleeping habits, causing a lack of presence in gardens for months at a time.

Hedgehogs are a natural source of pest control for gardeners, and their decreasing numbers are thought to be down to factors such as the loss of grassland and use of pesticides on allotments. There's a number of things that will make a huge difference to the lives of these animals, such as providing food and water overnight and practising organic growing.

What are your thoughts on this debate? Let us know your thoughts by tweeting us at @GYOmag leaving us a comment at facebook.com/growyourownmag or joining our forum at growfruitandveg.co.uk

GYO *must-haves*

AIR-POT GARDEN RANGE



Originally developed for professional tree nurseries and widely used by leading horticulturists, Air-Pot

containers actively encourage the production of a healthy root system. A new range has been designed for gardeners including everything from seed propagation trays to tender crop pots, potato towers and compost makers. Find out more at air-pot.com/garden

EIFFEL TOWER PLANT FRAME

Grow climbing edibles like runner beans in style with this fabulous themed frame. The product is made from galvanised steel to keep it sturdy whatever the weather brings. It's easy to assemble so you can make good use of your space. It's priced at £249.99 and can be purchased online at haxnicks.co.uk and UK garden centres.



SIMPLY CONTROL THERMOSTAT

Keep your under cover crops in ideal conditions with this thermostat from Simply Control. The unit's accuracy and versatility means it can be used to suit a wide range of edibles and help to prevent bolting that is caused by fluctuating temperatures. For more information, visit simplycontrol.co.uk



HARMLESS CAT DETERRENT

If you're having trouble with felines damaging your plot, it's best to deal with this issue as safely as possible. Catwatch is the only ultrasonic cat deterrent that's tested and approved by the RSPB for peace of mind. The product emits a high-pitched sound that humans can't hear but is unappealing to cats. This teaches them to avoid your growing space, leaving you free to enjoy your hard work. Visit conceptresearch.co.uk to find out more.





Smart idea:

TRY SOAKS & SPROUTS

Mark Diacono and **Lia Leendertz** reveal how you can enjoy tasty home-grown soaks and sprouts in just a matter of days

Something happens when you soak a seed overnight – quite a few things, in fact. Protein, vitamin and digestible energy levels all surge as the seed kicks into life. Metabolic activity increases. The dry, starchy resting state becomes active and vital, primed for life.

At these early stages the seed is furiously generating all the complex materials it needs to launch itself into the world. It seems almost cruel to cut it off at this hopeful stage, but if we catch it and eat it now a little of that vitality can be ours. In the germinating process all of the goodness in the seed becomes more ‘bioavailable’, and is easier to digest. Germination activates a plant’s stored energy, so a sprouted seed has fewer calories, yet more vitamins and minerals than the dry version.

In fact, even a sprouted seed isn’t the very fastest thing you can grow. Strictly speaking, this goes to ‘soaks’ – nuts and seeds that haven’t yet produced a sprout, but have soaked just long enough to swell up for germination.



BUY THE BOOK!

Extract taken and edited from *The Speedy Vegetable Garden* by Mark Diacono and Lia Leendertz. Published by Timber Press and priced at £14.99. Pictures courtesy of Mark Diacono.

Sprouts are a delicious ingredient, crunchy and fresh and with far more variety and complexity than a brush with the ubiquitous (though admittedly sweet and lovely) mung bean sprout would suggest. Sprinkle them with abandon to bring a fresh, nutty taste to sandwiches and salads.

TECHNIQUES

It’s incredibly easy to get a seed to sprout – just give them moisture and warmth and off they go. It’s what they are designed to do. They also need plenty of air, and most sprouting equipment allows quick drainage as well as easy watering. Most won’t need light so they can stay in a dark corner, but if after a few days they start to show small leaves, move them into the light so that they quickly turn green. Never start them off in direct sunlight as this can heat them up and dry them out. Average room temperatures with no dramatic fluctuations are perfect.

It’s possible to sprout seeds in a jam jar with a small square of muslin secured over the top with an elastic band, but it’s not ideal as the seeds are crammed together and drainage isn’t great, leaving scope for moulds to develop. For large seeds, use a sprouting bag and for small ones a tray sprouter. Both are available from specialist suppliers, with this equipment you can sprout the whole range of seeds.

SEEDS FOR SOAKING AND SPROUTING

Many sprouting times given are merely a guide – in warmer weather seeds will grow faster. Make a habit of tasting your sprouts at every stage of the process after the first soaking. Many are sweeter when they are younger, and you may find you prefer to grow them for a shorter or longer time.

Some sprouted seeds will still have a fairly large hull attached. To remove them, put the sprouts in a large bowl full of cold water and gently agitate them with your fingers until they come loose.



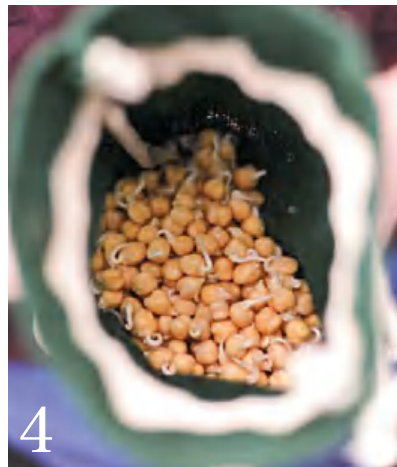
1



2



3



4

Step-by-step: Using a sprouting bag

Big seeds such as beans and chickpeas do well in a sprouting bag. They take up little room and are easy to rinse – you simply run water into them and leave them to drain.

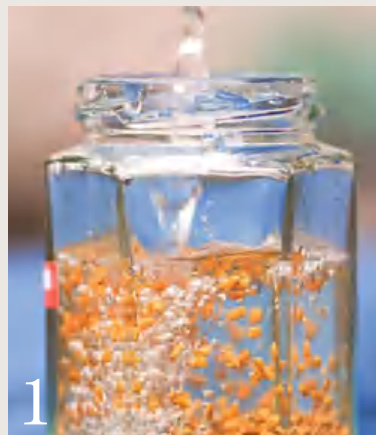
- 1 Soak your big seeds for eight to 12 hours. They should swell up.
- 2 Moisten the bag, pour the seeds in and give them a quick rinse through.
- 3 Rinse every 12 hours by running the bag under the tap, and leave to drip dry. Move them around at each time, so they don't root into the fabric, making them difficult to remove.
- 4 When the seeds sprout, eat them straight away after a final rinse. Store any left over in the fridge and check them regularly.

“BIG SEEDS SUCH AS BEANS AND CHICKPEAS DO WELL IN SPROUTING BAGS”

Step-by-step: Using a tray sprouter

Small and delicate seeds such as fenugreek would find the going a bit rough in a bag. For these seeds, use a sprouter with a series of draining trays. The seeds sit on the top and are easily rinsed. Most have several trays so you can sprout lots of different seeds at once.

- 1 First soak your seeds for eight to 12 hours. They should swell up, which prepares them for the germination stage.
- 2 Spread out the seeds on the surface of the sprouting tray. Remember that they are going to grow considerably in a short amount of time, so leave plenty of space around them.
- 3 Rinse the seeds every 12 hours. The roots will grow slightly into the drainage holes and fix the sprouts in place. Once this has happened you can submerge the whole tray for a minute and then drain thoroughly.
- 4 When the sprouts are long enough, rinse, then eat or store in the fridge. They make a delicious crunchy addition to salads or you could always try sprinkling them over stir fries.



1



2



3



4

Quick & easy

Your smart guide to: **CROPS TO GROW IN POTS**

It's easy to think that not having any real ground would mean that your dreams of home-grown harvests are unattainable. But you'd be wrong! Many crops thrive in pots, meaning you can enjoy a slice of the good life wherever you live

For a lot of people, a traditional veg plot consists of rows and rows of brassicas, legumes, onions and potatoes happily nestled among rich, fertile earth and spreading their roots into the ground. But, take a second to imagine a few different scenarios – a paved-over patio edged with stylish terracotta pots which are home to healthy salad leaves, a balcony full to the brim with an array of colourful chilli pepper plants and strawberries tumbling out of hanging baskets, or a windowsill with tubs and tubs of green leafy herbs parading their foliage with pride.

The amount of crops that will thrive in pots is extraordinary and it's truly inspiring to see how many growers have made a productive patch out of the smallest space. Read on for more information about the best crops for containers and for top tips on how to ensure they are successful.

VEG THAT WILL THRIVE IN POTS

There are a few key things to be aware of when choosing the right sort of plants to grow in containers, but whether you're new to this method of growing or looking to expand your existing collection of edible crops, there are plenty of vegetables to try. The vast majority of crops can be grown in pots with a few extra considerations and we've listed just a small number below. Varieties which have been bred to be slightly smaller than their traditionally larger cousins are usually the best so opt for types with use the word compact, mini or dwarf in their descriptions.

1 Salad leaves: This crops lends itself well to container-growing and there's an endless supply of varieties, meaning there's something to suit all growing conditions. Loose leaf salads can be enjoyed as cut-and-come again crops – this involves harvesting foliage when they are young to gain a second set of pickings. Most are best sown between March and September. Just bear in mind that they don't like too much heat when they're growing, so try to place pots in the shade if possible.

2 Tomatoes: As one of the best crops for beginners, tomatoes are ideal for growing in tubs. They can also be grown in grow bags – a standard sized bag

can usually sustain two or three plants. Start seeds off inside in March or April and then move to them into larger containers as they establish. 23cm pots should be suitable for their final growing positions. For something different, try growing 'Tumbler' tomatoes, which are great for hanging baskets or window boxes.

3 Carrots: Looking at the usual length of a carrot, you'd be forgiven for thinking you wouldn't be able to grow these in pots, but it's actually very do-able – and simple, too! You just need to ensure you have a container with the right depth. Growing smaller carrots is also a good idea. 'Parmex' – which produces round bite-size vegetables – is ideal for tubs as are baby carrots such as 'Mini Finger'.

4 Courgettes: These are prolific crops and will certainly give you bang for your buck. Remember that they need plenty of water to thrive so keep the soil moist around the base of the plant. Try growing smaller, compact varieties such as courgette 'Midnight' or 'Sunstripe', as larger types can swamp a standard pot, which means they're vigour will be restricted.





CAN YOU GROW FRUIT IN CONTAINERS?

The simple answer is yes! As well as strawberries (which look great in hanging baskets or towers), blueberries and raspberries, you can also keep dwarf fruit trees in pots. The overall height of these trees is restricted via the use of grafted rootstock. Rootstocks are the foundation of a tree and control the vigour of its growth and ultimate height and spread, and these are grafted onto the scion (which relates to the variety of the tree). Talk to your fruit tree supplier about how best to look after and manage their needs. Remember that some varieties aren't self pollinating so you will need to ensure you have enough room for two in these instances. There's a huge variety of fruit that can be grown in this way – from apples, cherries, apricots and plums, to pears, peaches, nectarines and more.

CROPS TO AVOID

Although a lot of edibles can be grown in pots, some (such as those mentioned above) will do better than others. Brussels sprouts, purple sprouting broccoli and other tall-growing vegetables won't grow as strongly in containers as they do in the ground, and large sprawling crops are also probably too big for tubs. Hungry and thirsty crops may suffer, too.

CONSIDERATIONS TO BEAR IN MIND

- **Use the best potting compost you can afford:** Because your plants will only have access to the soil or compost in their containers it's a good idea to make sure you buy a good quality product. This will give plants a good basis from which to thrive.
- **Choose big enough pots:** This is really important as crops need to be able to develop a proper root system in order to produce delicious yields. As a rule of thumb, 20-30cm pots are generally okay for most vegetables, but some do require bigger spaces. Remember also that long root crops will need taller pots and those with wide bulbs or roots will also need larger containers.
- **Water your plants properly:** Crops in pots can dry out quicker than those in the ground, so ensure you keep a close eye on the soil and keep it moist. On the flip side, soil in tubs is also more prone to waterlogging than the ground, so stand your containers on pot feet when inclement weather is forecast.

5 Beetroot: These mini globes grow well in tubs – sow a few in each pot, leaving enough space for the roots to develop. Choose round varieties such as 'Regala' which are still quite small when mature and harvest young for a sweet, tender taste.

6 Chillies: Fiery and spicy, chillies are a hit among first-time growers. Growing them in pots is one of the easiest ways to ensure these peppers thrive as it allows you to move them inside and outside depending on the weather. 'Cayenne' is a good reliable option, but you could also try something a little different such as 'Aji Crystal' or 'Nosferatu'.

7 Potatoes: Patio bags and containers can be used for growing potatoes, making the process simple and fuss-free. Just fill the bag or container with compost and then push your chitted tuber into the soil (with the shoot pointing skyward) to a depth of around 10-15cm. If placed in a bright, frost-free position and watered regularly they should produce delicious tubers for you to enjoy in many dishes.

These are only a selection of vegetables that can be grown in this way. Other crops that do well in pots include peas, herbs, dwarf beans and salad onions, plenty and more, too!



WIN!

GARDENING VOUCHERS WORTH £750!

Vote now in the 2016 awards and be in with a chance of winning some great prizes



Sponsored by



VOTE NOW AND WIN!

Over the past few issues you've been nominating your top horticultural brands and gardening names in the Great British Growing Awards 2016 and now it's time to vote for your favourites, giving them the chance to receive one of our prestigious awards.

We have £750 worth of brilliant National Garden Gift Vouchers to give away to one lucky reader in conjunction with the Great British Growing Awards 2016, plus many other fantastic gifts.

Two runners up will each be awarded with a spiralizer, worth £39, and one other reader will receive a book and seed bundle to prepare them for the next growing season. To be in with a chance of winning, all you need to do is vote in our awards by either filling in the form opposite and posting it to us or completing it online at growfruitandveg.co.uk/awards by January 4, 2016. All entrants will be automatically entered into our prize draw.

THE EDIBLE GARDEN SHOW AND GOOD LIFE LIVE 2016

This year's Great British Growing Awards are sponsored by The Edible Garden Show and Good Life Live, which takes place at Stoneleigh Park in Warwickshire from March 11 – 13, 2016.

Turn to page 46 to find out more about this event and see how you can save £14 on tickets.



Prizes
worth
£860!



Vote for your favourite in each category or if your favourite isn't there please write them in the box named 'other'



CALLING ALL VOLUNTEERS AND COMMUNITY GARDENERS

- Volunteer of the Year
- Best Community Growing Project

This year we're running two special categories to recognise worthy volunteers and community growing success. Nominate now to give these entrants the chance to win gardening vouchers to help them grow! The volunteer of the year will be judged by Christine Walkden and the winner will receive £250 worth of gardening vouchers while the best community growing project will be chosen by Chris Beardshaw and the winning group will receive £500 worth of National Garden Gift Vouchers.

Christine Walkden



Chris Beardshaw



To nominate a volunteer or community project for either of these awards, please email us at:
awards@growfruitandveg.co.uk
for a nomination form

Send your entries to:

Great British Growing Awards 2015, Marketing
Department, 21-23 Phoenix Court, Hawkins Road,
Essex, Colchester, CO2 8JY

Most Trusted Celebrity Gardener

- ☐ Jim McColl
- ☐ Sarah Raven
- ☐ Toby Buckland
- ☐ Alys Fowler
- ☐ Anne Swithinbank
- ☐ Sean James Cameron
- ☐ Christine Walkden
- ☐ Other

Most Inspiring Vegetable Garden to Visit

- ☐ Kew Gardens
- ☐ Ryton Organic Gardens
- ☐ Lost Gardens of Heligan
- ☐ West Dean
- ☐ RHS Wisley
- ☐ Hampton Court
- ☐ Tatton Park
- ☐ Other

Best Gardening Event

- ☐ RHS Hampton Court Flower Show
- ☐ Harrogate Flower Show
- ☐ Malvern Spring Show
- ☐ RHS Chelsea Flower Show
- ☐ Other

Best New Kitchen Gardening Book (published after September 1, 2014)

- ☐ *Epic Tomatoes*: Craig LeHoullier
- ☐ *Grow All You Can Eat In Three Square Feet*
- ☐ *Grow For Flavour*: James Wong
- ☐ *How To Create A New Vegetable Garden*: Charles Dowding
- ☐ *Kew On A Plate*: Raymond Blanc
- ☐ *The New Kitchen Garden*: Mark Diacono
- ☐ Other

Most Entertaining Kitchen Garden TV/Radio Programme (on TV in 2015)

- ☐ Big Allotment Challenge (BBC2)
- ☐ Gardeners' Question Time (BBC Radio 4)
- ☐ Beechgrove Garden (BBC2)
- ☐ Love Your Garden With Alan Titchmarsh (ITV)
- ☐ Gardeners' World (BBC2)
- ☐ Other

Best Fruit and Veg Seed Range

- ☐ Mr Fothergill's Seeds
- ☐ King's Seeds
- ☐ Thompson & Morgan
- ☐ Marshalls
- ☐ Suttons
- ☐ Other

Best Plug Plant Range

- ☐ Suttons
- ☐ Rocket Gardens
- ☐ Marshalls
- ☐ Dobies
- ☐ Thompson & Morgan
- ☐ Other

Best Nursery/Retailer Specialising in Fruit

- ☐ Ken Muir
- ☐ Blackmoor Nursery

- ☐ Ashridge Nurseries
- ☐ Other

Best One Stop Gardening Shop

- ☐ Wilkinsons
- ☐ B&Q
- ☐ Wyevale
- ☐ Harrod Horticultural
- ☐ Other

Best Online Retailer

- ☐ Amazon
- ☐ Thompson & Morgan
- ☐ Greenhouse Sensation
- ☐ Crocus
- ☐ Other

Best Garden Tools Range

- ☐ Spear and Jackson
- ☐ Bulldog
- ☐ Draper Tools
- ☐ Sneeboer
- ☐ Wolf-Garten
- ☐ Other

Best Greenhouse/Polytunnel Brand

- ☐ Hartley Botanic
- ☐ First Tunnels
- ☐ Premier Polytunnels
- ☐ Northern Polytunnels
- ☐ Other

Most Innovative Growing Product

- ☐ Air-Pot containers
- ☐ TomTato plant - Thompson & Morgan
- ☐ Quadgrow Planter
- ☐ Vitopod Heated Propagator
- ☐ Cherry Tree Sleeve Roll - Harrod Horticultural
- ☐ Other

Most Effective Composting Product

- ☐ Westland - Make Your Own Compost
- ☐ J Arthur Bower's Garotta Compost Maker
- ☐ HotBin Compost Bin
- ☐ Carbon Gold BioChar
- ☐ The Recycle Works Wooden Compost Bin
- ☐ Other

Best Eco-Friendly or Organic Veg Growing Product

- ☐ Nemaslug - Nemasys
- ☐ Natural Seaweed Fertiliser - Maxicrop
- ☐ Algon Organic Path, Patio & Decking Cleaner
- ☐ Enviromesh
- ☐ Other

Best Gardening Organisation

- ☐ National Vegetable Society
- ☐ National Trust
- ☐ The RHS
- ☐ Garden Organic
- ☐ Other

Best Garden Writer or Blogger

- ☐ Monty Don
- ☐ Carol Klein
- ☐ Alan Titchmarsh
- ☐ Jo Harrison
- ☐ Sean James Cameron
- ☐ Other

Title	Forename	Surname
Address		
		Postcode
Contact Number	Email	
Signature		Date

Your details will be processed by Aceville Publications Ltd (publishers of Grow Your Own magazine) in full accordance with data protection legislation. Aceville Publications Ltd and sister companies may wish to contact you with information of other services and publications we provide which may be of interest. Please tick here if you DO NOT wish to receive such information by post ☐ phone ☐ email ☐ SMS ☐. From time to time Aceville Publications Ltd will share details with other reputable companies who provide products and services that may be of interest to you. Please tick here if you DO NOT wish to receive such information by post ☐ phone ☐ email ☐ SMS ☐

See online for terms and conditions
growfruitandveg.co.uk/awards

CARBON GOLD™

**GRO
CHAR**

**GROW
WILD!**



**VOTE FOR US IN THE GROW YOUR OWN
GREAT BRITISH GROWING AWARDS 2015 - VOTE NOW AT
www.growfruitandveg.co.uk/awards**



INSPIRATIONAL GARDEN PRODUCT DESIGNS



PLEASE VOTE FOR US

BEST ONE STOP GARDENING SHOP

**MOST INNOVATIVE
GARDENING PRODUCT**



Harrod
HORTICULTURAL



DESIGN &
MANUFACTURE
SINCE 1954

Call: 0333 400 1500 (local rate) • www.harrodhorticultural.com

Grow your own



**Thompson
& Morgan**

**Thompson & Morgan would like to thank
all GYO readers who have nominated us
for an award in 4 categories!**

Pre-order your
Tomtato® plants -
**nominated for Best
New Veg Growing
Product now!**

Buy one 9cm potted
plant for £14.99 and
get a **second plant
FREE + FREE P&P**
worth £4.95.



Order online: www.thompson-morgan.com/GYA4

By Telephone: 0844 573 1686 quoting GYA4 (TCB55463)

Plants despatched from May 2016. Offer closes 31st January 2016. Please note that your contract for supply of goods is with Thompson & Morgan, Poplar Lane, Ipswich, IP8 3BU.

Thank you for nominating Draper Tools in The Best Garden Tools Range. Please VOTE for US! We have been supplying quality tools at affordable prices since 1919.

DRAPER Tools
www.drapertools.com



greenhouse sensation
Please VOTE FOR US

Quadgrow Best Product
Greenhouse Sensation Best Online Retailer
Vitopod Best Product

Call 0845 602 3774 www.GreenhouseSensation.co.uk

PREMIER POLYTUNNELS

We would like to thank you all for nominating us in The Great British Growing Awards.

Vote today at www.growfruitandveg.co.uk/awards

VOTE FOR US



Ken Muir

The staff and management of Ken Muir Ltd would like to say -THANK YOU for voting for us in the 2015 Grow Your Own Awards

KEN MUIR LTD Honeypot Farm, Weeley Heath, Clacton-on-Sea, Essex, CO16 9BJ visit: www.kenmuir.co.uk

SPEAR & JACKSON
Occasions Etched Trowels



Beautifully packaged stainless steel trowels with etched messages

"Gardening Queen"
"World's Best Gardener"
"Happy Birthday"
"Thank You"

The perfect gift for any occasion!



SPEAR & JACKSON

For more information contact Customer Services or your local area Sales Manager
Tel: 0114 281 4242 or e-mail: sales@spear-and-jackson.com



The Lost Gardens of Heligan

Vote for us as
'Most Inspiring Vegetable Garden to Visit'
heligan.com

THE EDIBLE GARDEN SHOW

Taking place at Stoneleigh Park in Warwickshire from March 11 – 13, The Edible Garden Show and Good Life Live offers a real taste of sustainable living. Over the two-day event you can learn how to take your home-grown dreams right from seed to plate, thanks to a range of interesting exhibitors and fun family activities. From gardening Q&A sessions and cooking demonstrations to small-holding advice and bee-keeping tips, you'll see all aspects of self-sufficiency covered.

Some of the key speakers you just won't want to miss are James Wong, Pippa Greenwood and Christine Walkden, who will be encouraging keen growers in their edible gardening quests throughout the weekend. These well known faces will be on hand to share their expert advice and keep visitors entertained with their personal experiences of life on the plot.

Two new speakers have also just been confirmed to appear at the show – Katie Rushworth and Mandy Barber. You will have probably seen Katie Rushworth presenting ITV's Love Your Garden alongside Alan Titchmarsh, while Mandy Barber (who contributes regularly to GYO) is one of the founders of Incredible Vegetables.

For up to date info about The Edible Garden Show and Good Life Live visit theediblegardenshow.co.uk



BUY TICKETS NOW!

GYO readers can buy two tickets for just £18 when quoting GYO18 online at theediblegardenshow.co.uk, saving £14 on the door prices. The offer is valid until March 11, 2016.

Maxicrop®

Thank you for nominating Maxicrop for the "Best Eco Friendly Veg Growing Product" PLEASE VOTE for us now!



Balanced healthy nutrition for ALL plants - and bumper crops of fruit and vegetables.



Our seaweed makes the difference...

GET A SLICE OF THE GOOD LIFE

THE EDIBLE
GARDEN SHOWS

11-13 MARCH 2016

#GETREADYTOGROW

theediblegardenshow.co.uk

GOOD
LIFE LIVE

STONELEIGH PARK
WARWICKSHIRE

#TIMETOBREATHE

thegoodlifelive.co.uk

2 TICKETS
FOR £18
ENTER CODE: GYO18 ONLINE



OUR SUPPORTERS

HomeFarmer

PoultryTalk



Kitchen
Garden

garden.
organic

GARDEN STORE
gardenstoreonline.co.uk





5 Great reasons to subscribe...

- 5 raspberry canes FREE* PLUS £5 gift voucher
- Money-saving reader offers and great discounts
- Regular FREE cover-mounted vegetable seeds and books
- Each issue delivered directly to your door
- Spread the cost with Direct Debit

PAY JUST £21.60 EVERY 6 ISSUES!*

Coming next month...

GROWING LEEKS

All the advice you need for cultivating, caring for and harvesting this delicious crop

SWEET PEPPERS

A complete run-through of the basics for growing this rewarding veg

PLANTING PEARS

Make your plot a little more fruity with the addition of these juicy yields

FREE BOOK

We're giving away a free copy of *The Gardeners Year* by Pippa Greenwood

**DO YOU
KNOW YOU CAN RENEW USING THIS OFFER?**

MORE SUBSCRIPTION OPTIONS...



Pay today with...
PayPal™

FOLLOW US ON...



PERFECT GIFT IDEA

*Treat yourself
or a friend
in time for
Christmas!*



5 RASPBERRY CANES FREE* PLUS £5 Gift voucher from Suttons

When you subscribe to Grow Your Own magazine

Subscribe to *Grow Your Own* magazine this month and receive these five free raspberry canes direct to your door from Suttons, plus you will also receive a £5 gift voucher to use on their website.

The long-cane raspberries are supplied with approximately 1.2m of year-old fruiting wood still attached, so you can plant them and enjoy their harvests in the same season! The first delicious berries will be ready to pick from mid-July. Why not try five long canes in a wigwam in a large pot and enjoy fresh raspberries on your patio next summer?



WORTH
OVER
£20

growfruitandveg.co.uk/subscribe

01795 414 665

Lines are open Monday – Friday 8am-8pm, Saturday 9am-1pm

PLEASE QUOTE GYO0116

*Terms and conditions apply. See online for further details



Transform your plot with **SHOP-BOUGHT VEG**

Kim Stoddart reveals how produce from the supermarket can be used by gardeners to boost their veg patch

January is traditionally a month for flicking through seed catalogues and getting excited about which new varieties you are going to try out in the year ahead. It's also the perfect time to undertake some growing adventures with leftover vegetables from your weekly food shop.

Now, conventional advice often dictates that this produce cannot and should not be used. The mere suggestion to some might well illicit some self-assured head-shaking and a rather sharp intake of breath, but don't listen because I'm here to tell you it can be done and it's actually a really fun activity to try at home.

There's a huge amount of room for experimentation here and because there's such a direct link with the food you buy, it's a great way of getting children and big kids everywhere interested in growing. As Holly Farrell explains in her excellent book on the subject, *Plants from Pips*, you don't need any previous gardening experience to do this, or indeed an actual garden.

Here are just a few of the easiest ideas to brighten up your January...

WORKING WITH FRUIT

If you have the room, plum, apricot and nectarine trees can be grown reliably from the humble stone in the middle of the fruit. It'll take quite a while (about five years) before they start fruiting but if you have the patience it's well worth the wait.

Any citrus plants (lemon, lime, orange, grapefruit etc) can also be grown rather easily from seed, too, and although these are unlikely to produce proper fruit, they do make rather lovely ornamental house plants.

Avocado stones also work well. In my experience it's a lot easier to simply plant a few stones in the soil than muck around with setting them rather precariously over a glass of water using tooth picks.

In her book, Holly also recommends kiwis and figs as being relatively straightforward to grow. With figs, apparently the varieties 'Smyrna' or 'Calimyrna' are the most likely

to have fertile pips. She also suggests pomegranates, dates (which must be fresh), olives and dragon fruit (also known as pitaya) as being well worth a punt.

SPROUTING SHOOTS

You don't need to buy small (often expensive) packets of special sprouting seeds – just work with what you happen to have in your food cupboard. Dried chick peas, lentils, sunflower seeds, fenugreek and mung beans are among those that you can use to create delicious sprouting shoots at any time of the year.

Simply soak the peas and beans overnight in water and then keep them in a sprouting box or jam jar, rinsing them daily till they start to shoot. They are delicious in salad and highly nutritious.

HERB POTS

Some herbs (such as parsley) can be rather fiddly to grow from seed and shop-bought herb pots can be easily pushed on once you have harvested some of their leaves. You

just have to be relatively quick and rescue the plants from their painfully confided quarters as soon as possible. Do this by very gently dividing the root ball into several small clumps and then plant them out into a spacious helping of potting compost. In return you'll get many plants for a minimum amount of effort.

SPUDS AND GARLIC

Come spring it's common to find a few potatoes that have started sprouting in a dark corner somewhere and these will probably have turned spongy and not be particularly appetising as a result. If you have a few like this why not plant them out?

This can also be done with garlic, which is so easy to grow. Just select the plumpest looking cloves and tubers for your growing adventures and watch them flourish.

TOMATOES, CHILLIES AND PEPPERS

Collect seed from shop-bought tomatoes, chillies and peppers and use these instead of shop-bought packets.

Heritage (heirloom) varieties are easy to extract seed from. Peppers can cross so aren't as reliable as tomatoes but they're still worth trying.

If you like your chillies hot then having a mixed variety could actually be a boon, as they tend to turn up the heat the more when they cross.

"TRY THESE TECHNIQUES AND YOU'LL NEVER LOOK AT YOUR SHOPPING BASKET THE SAME WAY AGAIN"

Simply slice open the pepper or chilli to remove the seeds for drying. With tomatoes it's best to ferment the seeds (in a splash of water) for a week in a jam jar before drying them out thoroughly.

HAVE SOME FUN EXPERIMENTING

Once you've tried these techniques you'll never look at your shopping basket the same way again and while I've just covered some of the easiest options there is a whole world of growing on potential at your disposal. A stroll around any ethnic food shop will have your head whirling with exciting possibilities and enable you to bag yourself interesting varieties of seed or propagation material which otherwise may have been hard to obtain online or in garden centres.

Lemongrass is a good one to try – either put it in a glass of water till it roots or simply stick in a pot with compost. Ginger is also doable and if you're feeling really adventurous you could even have a stab at trying to get a pineapple crown to root and grow. It can be done apparently. An entertaining book on the subject of wider experimentation in this way is Richard Langer's *The After Dinner Gardening Book* which follows the New York author's various experiences of trying to grow on from just about everything that goes through his kitchen.

Read what Kim gets up to on her blog by visiting getbadlybehaved.com



GET GREAT CROPS FROM THE SHOPS

PRODUCING EDIBLES FROM SUPERMARKET PRODUCE IS AN EXCITING CONCEPT THAT ANY GROWER CAN TRY. JUST REMEMBER THESE TIPS.

- Organic produce is preferable as it's less likely to have been sprayed with growth inhibitors (which are used to prolong shelf life).
- It's better to know which variety you're working with and to try to avoid F1 (hybrid) types where possible. These are produced from a combination of different plants so you won't know what you'll end up with, making it more of a risk.
- Fresh is always best and try to stay away from anything in brine or anything that's been frozen or heat treated in any way.
- Always go for the plumpest and ripest-looking produce.



NAOMI SCHILLINGER

TOMATOES & QUINCES

Fancy experimenting with something different in 2016? Naomi is on hand to offer advice

Some winters have been so mild that I've been out there harvesting nasturtium and lettuce leaves well into the new year, while other Januarys have seen me tucked up inside, watching the snow fall and reading my stash of gardening books.

This quiet time in the garden is a great moment for taking stock and I love perusing catalogues and online sites to find new and exciting crops and varieties to experiment with.

In the past I've had a go at eating dahlia tubers, trying a selection of varieties that I've dug up. The tubers on their own haven't been very tasty, but my home-made dahlia rostis have worked well as a bouncy and juicy accompaniment to slithers of smoked salmon and lashings of soured cream. Interestingly, Lubera has recently developed six new edible dahlia varieties (all marketed as part of the 'DeliDahlias' series) and these cultivars are supposed to taste delicious (either cooked as a veg on their own or used in hash browns, rostis etc). I've yet to grow and taste any tubers from this selection, but it's great to try something different.



**“WHEN SPACE IS
TIGHT FRUIT AND
VEG REALLY HAVE TO
EARN THEIR SPACE”**



TRY NEW TOMATOES

I've been experimenting with different tomato varieties and despite the cooler weather last summer, I've had some great crops. 'Sweet Aperitif' from Thompson and Morgan was a revelation, growing abundantly in long trusses in my greenhouse and its sweetness was divine. Every time I entered the greenhouse, I popped a few of these diminutive fruits into my mouth and was rewarded with a truly joyous taste sensation.

Equally enticing were my 'Golden Crown' tomatoes from Sea Spring Seeds. A little larger than your average cherry tomato, these delicious sweet and tangy yellow fruits were a wonderful contrast in the salad bowl to the red varieties



that I'd grown. I tried cultivating this variety both indoors and out, and I noticed that my outdoor-grown tomatoes had a much firmer texture and slightly sweeter taste than their indoor-grown counterparts. Growing is all about swings and roundabouts, I guess, and as ever

HOW TO TRAIN QUINCE TREES

Training fruit trees seems the ideal way of growing fruit in an urban plot. A couple of years ago I was inspired by a quince tree which was growing as a fan at the Chelsea Physic Garden and covered with stunning large pale pink blossom. I swiftly dug up an overgrown, space-grabbing prunus tree and planted a small quince maiden (a one-year-old stem) along a sunny fence in my back garden. One snip at the desired height produces a number of new stems, which will set you off on the exciting journey of artfully training your tree as a fan. Quince trees are a great addition to any plot – not only will you benefit from its wonderful large golden harvests in the kitchen, but the fruits also have the most delicious aroma that will fill a whole room once they have been plucked.

Training trees is not a quick business, but I love the idea of fruit trees in small spaces, where step-overs can be used to delineate a space and cordons, espaliers and fans will allow you to grow all manner of fruit whatever the size of your garden. For further inspiration,



West Dean near Chichester in West Sussex has beautifully trained fruit trees throughout their gorgeous walled kitchen garden. These have been crafted into all manner of beautiful shapes – from pyramids and s-shapes to a six branched candelabra and more, so are well worth going to see.

'Meeches Prolific' is a well-known and loved quince variety with bright yellow fruits, a good flavour and, as the name suggests, great yields. For even more aromatic fruits (which are fine-textured and ideal for cooking)

try either 'Isfahan' and 'Iranian Quince'. All of these varieties are available from Keepers Nursery in Kent, and they also supply ready-trained quince fans for a quicker route to your fruit, or for those who are not confident with the method of training.

Choosing your rootstock will have an influence on how big your fan will grow, so plump for Quince A for larger fans which will grow to 3m height and 4m spread and Quince C for smaller 2m height and 3m spread of the canopy.

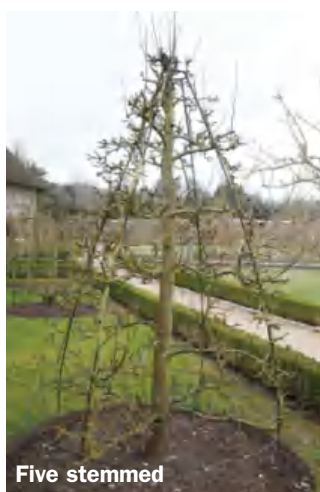


I'm yearning after more space for further experimentation with edible crops. When space is tight though, fruits and vegetables really have to earn their place in my garden and although this year I grew 'Gardeners Delight' as a baseline to test other varieties against. With such delicious new types out there, it won't be on my list again next year, but there are plenty of varieties that will be!

VARIETIES to try

- **'Sweet Aperitif'** For the sweetest and best looking cherry tomatoes, yellow **'Golden Crown'** from Sea Spring Seeds and orange **'Sungold'**. Your salads will never taste so good nor look so colourful.

Thompson and Morgan



Five stemmed



Four stemmed



S-shaped



Six stemmed candelabra



Twelve stemmed

SARAH RAVEN WINTER HARVESTS

Sarah is sowing sweet peas this month and enjoying her kale harvest

Out in the garden in winter, there's no better looking plant than 'Redbor' kale. It stands over a metre tall and has dark crimson, crinkled leaves, which sparkle with frost and rain as if each leaf has been strung with mini fairy lights around its edge. One of the other great things about this plant is that it is delicious to us but not to pests. Even the cabbage whites leave it alone in summer. Admire it where it grows, pick it for a vase, harvest it for frying as kale seaweed or make a salad from it. For 300g of leaves (to serve four to six people), de-rib the leaves, tear them up and dress in a mix of two tablespoons each of tahini, soya sauce and rapeseed or olive oil, as well as the juice and zest of a lime or lemon. Massage this sauce into the leaves for two minutes to wilt the kale. Serve topped with avocado and toasted pumpkin seeds.

For scented vases of cut flowers from the end of May, we sow sweet peas straight after Christmas, two seeds to root trainers or long, thin pots. All legumes, these included, thrive with a long root run, so deep pots are ideal. Water the compost and then push a pair of seeds in to about 2cm

below the surface. Cover with newspaper or a polystyrene tile to keep moisture and warmth in and light out. Some heat will speed up germination, but this is not essential. The seedlings will appear in about 10 days.

After sowing, protect from mice. These rodents love the seed and your whole crop

for white roots. As soon as these are visible through the holes in the bottom, pot the plants up into the next container size, or plant them out in a mild spell in March or April. Then you can retire inside and think of all the jugs of flowers you can have by your bed in a few months.

may disappear in one go. You can soak them in liquid seaweed fertiliser over night to make them unpalatable.

After four or five days, check for germination every day. Once the seedlings appear, remove the cover and keep them cool at about 5°C. This promotes root and not stem growth. A cold greenhouse or cold frame is ideal, but your plants will be fine in a light potting shed, stored on a window ledge. When I started I just used a couple of straw bales with an old reclaimed window over the top. This keeps off the worst of the wet and sweet peas don't need protection from the cold.

Pinch out the growing tip when there are three or four pairs of leaves already grown. Just squeeze it off between your finger and thumb, reducing the plant to 2-5cm in height. This promotes vigorous sideshoot formation. Check the bottom of the pot or root trainer

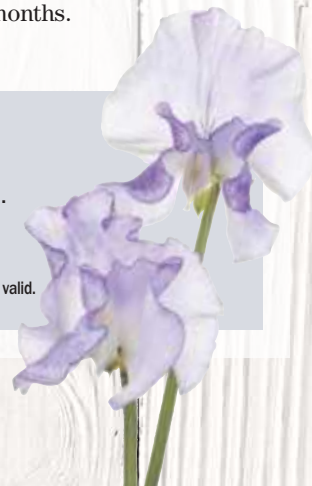


Reader offer

FREE SWEET PEAS!

GYO readers can enjoy a free set of 12 sweet pea tubes from Sarah Raven until the end of January – just pay P&P*. Simply add the tubes to your basket online at sarahraven.com and enter offer code **GYO16JAN**, or call **0345 092 0283** and quote offer code **GYO16JAN**.

*Offer can only be claimed once per order. P&P £4.95. Other items may be added to the same order for no additional P&P. Offer ends January 30, 2016, previous purchases are not valid.





keder
greenhouse

We are not a poly tunnel or glasshouse company, but designers and manufacturers of the **proven**, next generation growing environments.



Proven to withstand wind speeds in excess of 140mph

- Low Maintenance
- Excellent light transmission and heat retention
- Available in a wide range of sizes
- Resistant against extreme weather conditions
- Can be extended as your requirements grow
- The strongest greenhouse available
- Extend your growing season
- Unique Bubble and bead system
- 10 year guarantee against UV degradation

Keder Greenhouses Limited
Newtown, Offenham, Evesham, Worcestershire WR11 8RZ
t: +44 (0) 1386 49094 sales@kedergreenhouse.co.uk
www.kedergreenhouse.co.uk @KederGreenhouse



“Slug Bell”



“The World’s Safest & Best Slug Control Device”

Control Slugs & Snails in the Garden with the SlugBell



Slug Control



Slug bell



Snail Control



The **Slug Bell** is Safe in the Garden for **Cats, Dogs, Pets, Birds, Hedgehogs, Bees Earthworms, Wildlife** & the Environment. It is made of Metal & will last for Years, also an attractive & decorative feature in The Garden or Vegetable plot. The only long-term answer to control Slugs & Snails. Available in Garden Centres (see Website).
Price from £12.50 to £14.99 + P&P

The Ideal Hosta Protector & the Perfect Garden Gift.

How It Works: Simply put the stick with mesh basket into the ground where you have a slug problem then fill the mesh basket with ordinary slug pellets and the put the bell shape over the basket. Slug Pellets give off a Yeast Vapour that attracts Slugs day & night. It can be moved around the garden as required and the bell shape protects the pellets from being washed away by the rain or watering.

You can see a demonstration video, just type in **Slug Bell** on YouTube.

Please Call for a Catalogue Tel: 01932 221501

RainBow House, RainBow Garden Products.

11 Church Street Walton on Thames Surrey KT12 2QP

www.slugbell.com

SUTTONS
SEEDS

Est. 1806

**JAMES WONG'S
GROW FOR
FLAVOUR**



With the James Wong Grow for Flavour range of seeds and plants from

Suttons you can halve your labour and double your harvest with the reward being flavour that simply can't be bought.

Book + 6 packets of James Wong Seeds **FREE**
58 86 90 £20.00

NEW SEED AND PLANT RANGE for 2016 available from **SUTTONS**

See the full range available to order now at www.suttons.co.uk/jameswong



Tromboncino Squash

20 seeds	18 76 50	£2.49
3 Super Plug Plants	25 31 50	£6.99



Green Zebra/ Rosella Tomatoes

30 seeds of each variety	18 76 90	£3.99
3 Green Zebra Super Plug Plants	24 49 91	£7.99
3 Rosella Super Plug Plants	24 50 11	£7.99



Dos & don'ts

✓ **DO** go round your garden buildings on the morning after you've had a heavy fall of snow and brush it off the roofs. The weight is enough to flatten polytunnels and cloches, break greenhouse glass and stove in shed roofs – so a little effort now saves a lot of grief later. While you're at it, knock thick coverings off vulnerable fruit tree branches, too.

✗ **DON'T** waste your Christmas tree as it has a variety of uses in the veg garden. The needles make a naturally acidic mulch which blueberries and other low pH lovers adore, and the finer branches can also be shredded for the compost heap. When you're down to the trunk, weave it into any hedges to block gaps or cut it up and stack it into a log pile that wildlife will quickly colonise.

UNDER COVER

What to do now in the greenhouse and polytunnel

HOW TO AVOID *Dying wormeries*

Wormeries are mostly trouble-free, you just need to add kitchen scraps to the top and rich, nutrient-packed worm wee comes out the bottom for you to dilute and turbo-charge your plants. Occasionally, though, it all goes quiet, and when you lift the lid to find out what's going on you find all your beneficial creatures have died.

At this time of year, it's often because wormeries have become too cold or wet. Always bring your container into a shed or garage before the winter weather strikes. Wrapping it in old jumpers also helps. Leave the tap open so it doesn't get waterlogged, and add a little warming food, like bread, to keep your worms going – not too much though, as these invertebrates need a fraction of their summer rations at this time of year.



CHILLIES FOR OVERWINTERING

Most of us grow chillies as annuals, sowing anew each year. But they're actually tender perennials, and it's possible to keep them going from one year to the next – in fact some types can live for several years. It's really worth the extra effort as the older they get the more productive they are, cropping more heavily each season until the branches are laden with fat peppers.

The variety you choose is really important as some are more cold-

tolerant than others. Luckily the ones which survive winter more readily are among the hottest, most delicious types you can grow. They are best planted in the greenhouse, preferably in a border where they can stretch out their roots. At the end of the season, once they start to drop their leaves, pick off the last fruits and trim the tops back by a third. Use a greenhouse heater to keep the temperature just above freezing (about 2-5°C is enough). Don't water much and they should hunker down until spring – once you see signs of new shoots appearing, revert to your normal routine and you can look forward to a bumper harvest in summer.

3 to try today

'Rocoto' is also known as the tree chilli as it's well over your head once it's a few years old, with buckets of hot scarlet peppers to match (realseeds.co.uk)

'Aji Limon' has prolific crops of fabulously tangy, citrussy fruits which pack a real punch of heat and are easy to dry for winter use (seaspringseeds.co.uk)

'Chocolate Habanero' is so blisteringly hot it takes you a while to realise that the large, dark brown peppers have a smoky, rich flavour (simpsonsseeds.co.uk)



STEP-BY-STEP Overwintered plant care

Keeping frost-tender herbs like lemon verbena, French tarragon and scented-leaved pelargoniums through winter saves you buying new stock each year. Plus with a season's growth already in the bag you get big, mature plants with bumper harvests to match.

1



Once you've lifted and potted up your plants in gritty compost, trim the tops back by a third to a half to reduce the pressure on the roots and encourage the crop to grow back bushy next year. Then water once, and that's it – keep the soil dry and the roots will stay healthy.

2



Patrol your plants every week just to check them over and make sure they're still in good health. Look out for yellowing, dying and fallen leaves which can harbour nasty fungal rots like botrytis – pick them off as soon as you spot them and move to the compost heap.

3



Make sure the stems are nice and firm. Sometimes you'll get a patch of die-back and so if you find a soft spot prune it out promptly to make sure it doesn't spread into healthy tissue. Always cut back to just above a pair of buds, where a new stem will sprout from next spring.

4



Look out for green sprouts of new growth emerging. That's your cue to start watering normally again, adding a weak liquid feed once a fortnight for encouragement. When the last threat of frost has passed, harden off carefully and plant out back in the garden.



Sow parsley

Parsley is notorious for taking ages to germinate, sometimes failing altogether. You'll hear all sorts of folk remedies to this, from pouring boiling water over just-sown seeds to popping them in the freezer overnight. Most rely on providing a dramatic temperature variation – but you can do this naturally simply by starting them a bit earlier than usual.

Start with fresh seed (like most members of the carrot family, parsley doesn't keep for long) and sow into modules so you don't have to disturb their roots too much. Cover only very lightly or not at all, though in this case spray daily to avoid dehydration. Place the trays in a cool greenhouse or on the windowsill of a unheated spare room. With temperatures plunging to well below freezing at night and then the slightest winter sunshine magnified through glass into balmy warmth, your parsley success rate should be much better.

WEEKEND PROJECT: Maintenance

PUTTING IN A GREENHOUSE PATH

While the greenhouse is relatively empty it's the perfect opportunity for an upgrade. In the excitement of a new structure arriving, the first thing you want to do is fill it with plants, so sorting out your inside space takes something of a back seat. But after a season or two you start getting a bit fed up of negotiating uneven earth floors full of weeds – so now's the time to spruce things up with a brand new path down the middle. This also stops you stepping on the earth and compressing it.

Define the borders with a wooden board edging, measured to the width and length of the stone slabs you're using plus about 2cm. Use pegs to hold them in place, and make sure they're level.

Dig out the path to about 10cm and line with weed-suppressing membrane, stapled to the boards. Put down a 5cm layer of sand and tamp it down thoroughly, checking it's absolutely level. Then lay your slabs on top – again, keep checking the levels, using a rubber mallet to even things out until you're absolutely satisfied. Finally, mix sand and cement 50:50 to make a mortar, then brush it into the cracks. Water lightly and it'll set, giving you a neat and practical centrepiece that will last for years to come.



SIMON AKEROYD

PLANT A CHERRY TREE

This month **Simon** is establishing a cherry fan and planting Jerusalem artichokes in a container

This month I'm planting a 'Morello' cherry in a corner of my garden. I love cooking with cherries and many flavoursome dishes are created by them, such as home made cherry pie. Sour types like 'Morello' and 'Nabella' are ideal for north-facing walls or shady areas of the garden as they will still ripen without much sunlight. In addition to this, I will also be planting Jerusalem artichokes in a large dustbin this month in the hope of a bumper harvest of this gourmet veg next year.

ESTABLISHING A CHERRY FAN

The cherry tree I have bought has been budded onto a colt rootstock which will reduce its vigour enough so that it can be trained as a fan. It's more vigorous than some of the other commonly found dwarfing types, but this is fine for me as I have a large wall space to fill. Colt also tolerates poorer soil which suits my garden as most of it is rocky limestone. If you can only purchase cherries on Gisela 5 or Gisela 6 rootstocks, then choose 5 if you want a smaller tree (up to 3m) or 6 for a slightly bigger one.



You will need

• Vine eyes • Wire • Drill • Measure • Rawl plugs • Bamboo canes • 'Morello' cherry tree • Secateurs • String • Spade and fork • Compost or well-rotted manure

JERUSALEM ARTICHOKE IN CONTAINERS



Jerusalem artichokes are vigorous crops and if left unchecked can rapidly take over the allotment. I've therefore decided to try and grow some in a container to restrict their size. I'm planting the variety 'Fuseau' as it has less knobbly tubers than other types.



Take a metal dustbin and drill drainage holes in the bottom. Place the container on bricks to allow excess water to drain away. Fill with peat-free compost mixed with well-rotted manure. Plant tubers 12cm deep and about 25cm apart and cover with more organic matter.



Place the container in a sheltered, sunny location. After harvesting, save some of the smoother tubers for the following season to ensure the desirable traits are retained. If the yield is restricted, you can enjoy the display of their golden flowers in summer.

STEP-BY-STEP: PLANTING A CHERRY TREE



If you have existing plants on the wall or fence, remove them so the fruit tree will be free from encroachment. This will allow more light to reach your crop and improve the quality and flavour of the eventual harvests.



Clear the site of perennial and annual weeds prior to planting. Use a fork or spade to break up any compaction in the soil and remove large stones. This will make the ground more hospitable for growing this fruit tree.



Measure out and drill holes into the walls to support the vine eyes which will hold four horizontal wires. They should be 30cm apart with the lowest wire 45cm above ground level, be sure to take your time with this.



Screw vine eyes into rawl plugs in the wall and then thread the galvanized wire through the holes. Ensure that the wire is tense which will help to keep the tree safe and secure and prevent any damage to the branches.



Dig out the planting hole which should be three times the circumference of the root system to allow plenty of room for its growth. Plant the tree to the depth of the base of the trunk, keeping it nice and sturdy.



Back fill around the tree with a 50:50 mix using the left over soil from digging the hole with garden compost or well-rotted manure. Firm the soil in around the rootball to ensure the tree stays in position.



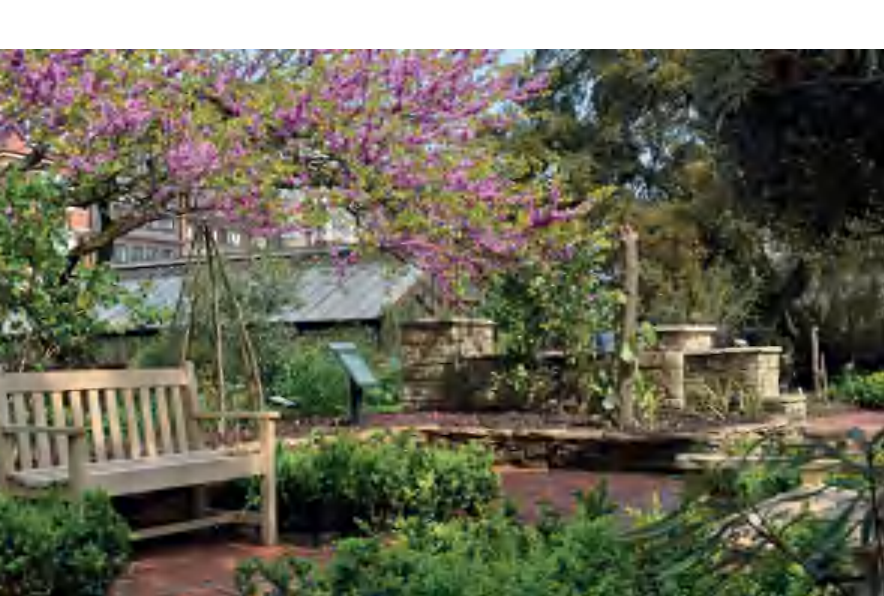
Cut back the trunk to above a set of laterals about 40cm from the ground. If doing this job in winter then wait until spring before making pruning cuts as this will help to avoid the development of a canker infection.



Attach bamboo canes at 45 degrees to the trunk. Train laterals on the left hand side to the canes, and repeat with any that need to be tied on the right. This make sure that the tree grows according to the required shape.



Mulch around the base of the tree using well-rotted manure to conserve moisture and suppress weeds. Ensure that the material is kept off the trunk as this will cause the development of rot.



One
to visit

A living PHARMACY

Michael Wale visits the Chelsea Physic Garden and finds a fascinating plant collection in the newly revamped Garden of Medicinal Plants

Walking around the recently renewed Garden of Medicinal Plants at the Chelsea Physic Garden is like opening a medicine cupboard to find that all the bottles and pills have been replaced with plants.

The space covers three quarters of an acre and showcases a vast collection of medicinal plants which have been used throughout history. Its position within the Chelsea Physic Garden is an important one. This site as a whole dates back to 1673 when it was created by the Society of Apothecaries and with it being only a wide road back from the Thames it is blessed with a microclimate that nurtures tender plants in particular.

The decision to completely re-plan the medicinal garden was made five years ago. Head gardener Nick Bailey says it was based on the desire to revamp and expand this area and re-introduce a number of plants that had been lost from the collection. Belgium based Dr Karina Kitzing, a doctor of natural science and biochemistry, was employed in research and Dr Henry Oakley, who was on the gardens' own advisory board, had a key role to play, too.

Although it took a year to get all of the plants together from around the world, the result is that the collection has been nearly doubled. The beds are arranged according to geographical or medical discipline and are full of interesting specimens, so are a real treat to look around.

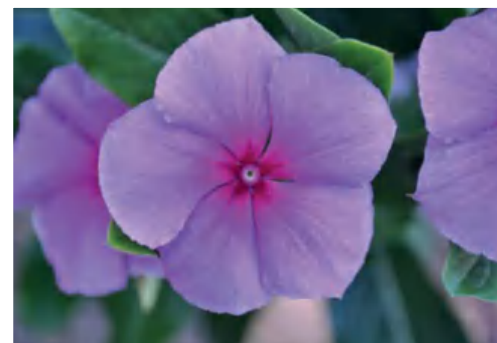


Nick explains that what fascinates him about the collection is the story of plants that have made it from traditional medicinal uses to modern regulated pharmaceuticals.

"Some have been passed down generations from family remedies and once scientific disciplines are applied they do have medicinal properties," he says.

As I walk round them, Nick points out *Passiflora* (a passion flower) saying that five years ago a study showed it was effective in the treatment of depression. He also urges me to look at a blue-grey reed, which he says grows five metres from the ground every year.

"It yields Lignacaine, which used in dentistry and ophthalmology," he explains. "On top of that it is also the plant used to make reeds for saxophones and clarinets. It's



something I knew in my past gardening roles as an ornamental. It's delving into what these plants can really do that is so interesting about my job".

Nick purposively does not encourage people to grow these medicinal plants at home expecting them to provide medicinal results, because that takes the intervention of pharmaceutical companies, but he does say they can be grown for interest and their personal medical history. Two plants he says growers could try cultivating are names I know immediately. Firstly turmeric, which is renowned for its use in curry. Medicinally its root is used to counter arthritis, menstrual problems, headaches, colds and headaches. From personal experience I've used the curry powder as an antiseptic for a cut, advised by my Indian cookery teacher!

Cardamon is another well known name in our kitchens, but it has a medical use as well, and is here in the herbal remedies bed. A member of the ginger family, it has been used in the treatment of dental problems such as tooth decay and gum troubles. It is also claimed to be a cancer fighter. *Euphorbia peplus* is being used for skin cancer and spilanthus has just been licensed for treating toothache, too.

The team's work in the medicinal garden is never over. Panman ginseng is proving challenging to grow, and is currently nurtured within the glasshouse, and Star anise, which is used to treat flu, is even harder to persuade to transfer to the Chelsea garden.

**For more information visit
chelseaphysicgarden.co.uk**



THE ORGANIC GARDENING CATALOGUE

Introducing over 50 NEW seed varieties for 2016

Pictured:
Organic Carrot 'Cosmic Purple'

Organic Vegetable and Herb Plants

Onions, Garlic and Shallots

Organic Seed Potatoes

Only good things for your garden

Call 01932 878570 for your FREE copy or request one online.
organiccatalogue.com

The Organic Gardening Catalogue, Heritage House, 52-54 Harrow Moon Lane, Addlestone, Surrey KT15 2SF



Ken Muir

Soft fruit specialist to request your latest FREE brochure

Please call: 01255 830181
or visit: **www.kenmuir.co.uk**

Please quote GYO16JA

Please write to: KEN MUIR LTD, Dept GYO16JA,
Honeyput Farm, Rectory Rd, Weeley Heath,
Clacton-on-Sea, Essex, CO16 9BJ



Subsiders of quality fruit trees, soft fruit bushes, canes and vines



Cherry Aid®

Fruit growing is enjoyable and rewarding but when it comes to cherries, plums and peaches, birds and insects are major pests and often destroy the crop before it's picked.

The solution: **Cherry Aid** branch wraps.



Follow us on Twitter 



The reusable wraps fit easily around individual branches to protect the growing fruit, resulting in a top quality crop. CherryAid nets can also be used to shield the buds and blossom from frosts early on in the season.

From £9.95 for two 1-metre wraps.

Available from
Grow at Brogdale www.brogdaleonline.co.uk
01795 531 888

Ken Muir www.kenmuir.co.uk
01255 830 181

Frank P Matthews www.frankpmatthews.com
01584 812 800

UK Patent Appl. GB252057 US Design Patent No D720,192
Registered Community Design 002344093

More info at cherrynets.co.uk
01462 420669

Fruit growing, all wrapped up © CherryAid® 2015



Smarten Up this winter with an

Agamemnon TIMBER

COMPOST BIN

No Nails or Screws Required

* Quick Easy Assembly *

Designed and made by us in the UK

Single, double or triple bins available in a size to suit you. Plus treated timber so it's maintenance free too!

Free delivery to the UK mainland
order online at www.agamemnon-timber.co.uk

or call us 01284 848731
Monday to Friday 9-4pm



Grow like a pro APPLES



Find all the essential information of growing this classic fruit with **Markus Kobelt**, managing director of Lubera



Apples have developed a great cultural and historical significance over the years. They often stand alone on the plot and one tree should provide you with yields for a number of seasons. It's best to choose a disease-resistant variety such as 'Discovery', as this edible can be vulnerable to many problems. A modern crop should bear fruit from the second year, and can grow up to 3m tall and 1.5m wide, but bear in mind that some produce lots of leaves at the beginning and have later yields and dwarf rootstocks are also available. I'd also recommend leaning away from the standard types found in the supermarket like 'Gala', 'Braeburn' and 'Pink Lady' as they are prone to fungal infections.

The majority of apple varieties are cross-pollinators which provides diversity. As the blossom is so attractive to insects, they're incredibly easy to pollinate, and this process will normally happen without too much intervention. However, if you find the tree is struggling, try distributing the pollen with your finger tip or a soft paintbrush.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

In many gardens, apple trees are expected to grow amongst other edibles in a restricted space. If this is the case for you, try planting bushy, compact varieties such as 'Maloni'. Sowing from seed is often an unreliable method, so it's wise to choose a rootstock like M9 instead. Remember to choose a sunny, sheltered spot and dig the hole no deeper than the roots, but around three times the diameter of the span between November and March. Lower the tree down gently and fill back in with soil once you're happy with the position.

CONTINUED CARE

I personally advise to avoid pruning completely, or only do so as little as possible, but know that there are differing opinions on this. Cutting back the branches primarily promotes leafy growth, while allowing the plant to develop freely encourages fruit set, and makes the tree smaller and more productive. Apply a potassium-rich fertiliser once a year in early spring to boost the nutritional value of the soil to maximise your chances of quality yields.

For a wide range of apple varieties, visit lubera.co.uk

"CROPS BEAR FRUIT FROM THEIR SECOND YEAR"

GYO says

- If you see any disease-ridden shoots, cut them back immediately to prevent the spread of brown rot and bitter pit.
- Apply a leafmould mulch around the base of the tree in spring and autumn to keep the soil evenly moist. Remember to avoid contact with the trunk as this helps to prevent rot.
- Once the fruit has swelled and developed a good colour, taste a few to see if they're ready for hand-picking.
- Later varieties can be stored for around three months in wooden crates in a dark, cool place such as a cellar. Just keep an eye out for bruised fruit and signs of rodent activity.

Space Saving Cordon Fruit Trees

SCRUMPTIOUS ORCHARD TREES PERFECT FOR ANY SIZED GARDEN OR PATIO



- Exceptional flavour
- Reliable, rapid establishment
- Plant in tubs or beds
- Heavy crops on small trees



10% OFF

Giant Raspberry

RASPBERRY JOAN J - An outstanding spine-free, autumn fruiting, primocane raspberry. Superb flavour and stunning berry size make this variety second to none for picking and eating. The berries are 30% larger than Autumn Bliss and freeze exceptionally well. The canes are short and sturdy and may not require supporting in sheltered gardens. Season: late July - Oct. Plant canes 40cm (16in) apart.

RSP008 6 Canes Usually £14.95 **NOW £13.45**

FREE ADVISORY SERVICE

Growing fruit is not difficult but if you have any queries you can take advantage of our FREE after-sales advisory service.

POMONA FRUITS

Order by phone, online or with the coupon:

01255 440 410 Quote GY1

PomonaFruits.co.uk/gy1

POMONA FRUITS LTD, Dept GY1, Pomona House, 12 Third Ave, Walton-on-Naze, Essex CO14 8JU

Call for our FREE Specialist Garden Fruit Catalogue - 64 pages packed full of top fruits, soft fruits and accessories for the home gardener. 01255 440 410



See our complete range online:

Cordon Collections 3 trees only £59

APC909 Apple & Pear Collection 1x Xmas Pippin, 1x H/Russet, 1x Concorde **£59**

APC904 Apple, Plum & Cherry Collection 1x Scrumptious 1x Victoria, 1x Summer Sun **£59**

Bred in the UK. RHS Award of Garden Merit. **SF Self-fertile variety** (pollinator not required)
Cultural instructions are supplied. Delivery is within 28 days. Offer closes 31st January 2016.

CODE	PRODUCT	PRICE	QTY	TOTAL
APC042	APPLE CHRISTMAS PIPPIN	£21.55		
APC009	APPLE HEREFORDSHIRE RUSSET	£21.55		
APC014	APPLE SCRUMPTIOUS	£21.55		
PEC001	PEAR CONCORDE	£20.25		
PLC003	PLUM VICTORIA	£20.25		
CHC003	CHERRY SUMMER SUN	£22.45		
APC909	APPLE & PEAR COLLECTION	£59		
APC904	APPLE, PLUM & CHERRY COLLECTION	£59		
RSP008	RASPBERRY JOAN J (6 CANES)	£13.45		
Please add £7.95 p&p to total order				£7.95
			TOTAL	

☐ Please send me the FREE Pomona Fruits Catalogue

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms

Address

Postcode

Email

Tel

Delivery to mainland UK (excluding Highlands)

Please state safe place where parcel can be left, if you are out when it is delivered.

GY1

Vertical Cordon Fruit Trees

These space-saving columnar trees are attractive as well as fruitful and are perfect for smaller gardens. They can be planted 2-3ft apart and can also be grown in pots on a sunny patio or balcony. Cordons are approximately 4ft tall on despatch and will grow to 6-8ft.

APPLE CHRISTMAS PIPPIN - This new Cox-like apple is easy to grow & crops heavily countrywide. The eating quality is exceptional. Crisp, juicy, sweet & aromatic with a very pleasant honey aftertaste. Stores until March. Requires a pollinator (e.g. Herefordshire Russet or Scrumptious).

APC042 Usually £23.95 **NOW £21.55**

APPLE HEREFORDSHIRE RUSSET - Combines the rich aromatic flavour of Cox with a golden russet skin. A favourite in taste testing trials. Easy to grow. Crops well countrywide. Stores until Dec. **SF**

APC009 Usually £23.95 **NOW £21.55**

APPLE SCRUMPTIOUS - Early dessert apple named for its wonderful complexity of flavours. Crisp, sweet, rich & aromatic. Heavy cropping & disease resistant. Suitable countrywide. **SF**

APC014 Usually £23.95 **NOW £21.55**

PEAR CONCORDE - Excellent late pear suitable for most locations. Large fruits with smooth, juicy flesh & rich, sweet flavour. Crops heavily and reliably from an early age. Stores very well. **SF**

PEC001 Usually £22.50 **NOW £20.25**

PLUM VICTORIA - The UK's best known plum. Pinkish red fruit with sweet, yellow, juicy flesh. A very popular dessert variety but also excellent cooked, producing a lovely pink syrup. Heavy cropping. Can be grown in the north. **SF**

PLC003 Usually £22.50 **NOW £20.25**

CHERRY SUMMER SUN - This dark red dessert cherry is an excellent choice for the north and more exposed areas, cropping well even in poor summers. Large, sweet fruits. Excellent flavour. **SF**

CHC003 Usually £24.95 **NOW £22.45**

SAVE up to £22.80

Send to: **POMONA FRUITS LTD, Dept GY1, Pomona House, 12 Third Avenue, Walton-on-Naze, Essex CO14 8JU**

I enclose cheque/P.O. made payable to **POMONA FRUITS LTD**

for £



or charge my ☐ VISA ☐ MASTERCARD ☐ MAESTRO ☐ DELTA

Card No

Start Date / / Card Expires / /

Security Code / / Issue No

(Last 3 digits on back of card) Maestro cards only

Signature

FRUIT & NUT TREES • SOFT FRUITS • SUPER FRUITS • GRAPE VINES • STRAWBERRY PLANTS • RHUBARB CROWNS • HEDGING • ASPARAGUS CROWNS and more

CHRIS BEARDSHAW

PLANTING DAMSONS

GYO's new fruit gardener Chris Beardshaw shares his expert advice on growing damsons

Bejewelled skeletal plants define a garden's structural composition this month, and you can be sure that a fine bone arrangement now ensures beauty in floral art later in the year. Trees are of course essential to the plan and fruit trees offer plentiful additional rewards for many seasons to come.

Familiar to anyone who has roamed the lanes of the western counties of Worcestershire, Herefordshire and Shropshire, the damson is a peculiar relic of an age when prime land was utilised for apple and pear plantation while the damson was resigned to a lowly place in bountiful hedgerows. A relative of the wild *Prunus insititia* and the round fruited but much smaller bullace, its pure white blooms are to be seen adorning an unruly nest of rounded canopy in early spring.

**“THE MAJORITY
OF TREES WILL BE
AVAILABLE BARE
ROOT NOW”**

Since the majority of trees will be available bare root now, this month is ideal for planting damsons as long as the ground is not wet or frozen. Ensure they are planted as swiftly as possible on arrival and do plunge into a bucket of tepid water to enliven parched roots. Prepare the ground by excavating twice the depth and width of the root spread, fork the sides and base of the hole to encourage new roots to permeate the surrounding ground and mix into the backfill material generous quantities of well rotted manure along with mycorrhizal fungi to aid root productivity. The latter is particularly effective on heavier clay soils or in some of the more root competitive environments, for example where hedges are planted.



Generally the trees are offered as clear stem standards, and once mature, can yield tens of kilos of fruit come September. With most plants offered on St Julian rootstocks, expect an ultimate height and spread of up to 4m. Greater height and tolerance of poor soils can be gained from utilising the vigorous Brompton rootstock. However, for a more modest crop try planting fan trained specimens on the semi dwarfing WA-VIT rootstock, although pruning diligence is required to maintain form and to control the eager stem growth by cutting all previously fruited stems back by up to half in August.

Such is the abundance of canopy growth of some trees that young standard plants will often require substantial staking to avoid uprooting and damage from winds. A key to their garden worthiness is resilience and reliability – despite early flowering there is rarely a poor crop, thanks largely to their self fertility, even in areas where a challenging climate hampers other fruit. They also require little or no canopy pruning, with only crossing or damaged limbs being removed in mid summer to avoid the possibility of the winter spores of silver leaf infecting plants.

Damsons ripen well into September, their flesh remaining sharp to taste until they almost cascade from drooping, burdened trees, making my childhood task of picking from damson orchards in Worcestershire a pleasure and the taste of damson crumble a very fond memory.

It is worth persevering with local collections and specialist nurseries for more unusual or locally proven types. Amongst the finest of the 40 or so varieties still in cultivation to look out for are:

- Westmoorland Damson
- Shropshire Prune
- Farleigh Damson
- Merryweather Damson
- Blue Violet
- Godshill Damson
- Dalrymple



TOP JOBS

- New plantings of productive bushes and shrubs can be especially prone to wind chill and desiccation of buds and stems. To minimise damage use horticultural fleece screens supported on stakes or canes in rows or to individually enclose plants to the tip of their canopy.
- If you took the precaution of potting up strawberry runners last summer it's worth bringing a crop into the glasshouse now to promote early cropping. Take care to clean incoming plants and containers of old leaves, diseased material and inspect carefully for molluscs that may be hiding in them.
- This is the last chance to prune grapes to avoid sap bleeding from cuts. Trim all lateral

shoots that fruited back to three buds from the main stem. Additionally shorten the main leaders by up to one third if they have reached the end of their allotted space.

- Reapply grease bands to fruiting trees and their stakes to prevent the wingless females of winter moth ascending into trees.
- Bulky organic matter fertilisers and slow release products can be spread onto the rooting zone of fruit trees to ongoing assist bud development and growth as the season progresses.
- Peach and nectarine trees are early into flower,

especially those cultivated indoors so feed now with bone meal or seaweed granules to prompt new growth.

- Summer fruiting raspberries should be pruned now removing to just above ground all those stems that have fruited. Stems grown last year can be tied to the horizontal training wire, with those exceeding the height laid and tied along the wire.
- Prune newly planted gooseberry and redcurrant plants by taking out all weak and crossing growth, then shorten healthy structural stems by one third.





1



2



3



BUY THE BOOK!

Extract taken and edited from *The Winter Garden* by Emma Hardy. Published by Cico Books (£14.99).

Practical growing project: WINTER LETTUCE

Add this leafy veg to your collection and create an attractive plant display with help from **Emma Hardy**

Picking lettuce at this time of the year is a real treat and it will crop for several months if kept in ideal conditions. When buying seeds make sure you select a variety suitable for winter growing such as 'Winter Density'.

Using a cloche will raise soil temperatures and provide your edibles with ideal conditions for germination and the development of yields. Just make sure to take this covering off regularly to allow good air flow and prevent bolting.

START SOWING YOU WILL NEED

- Container with tiers
- Black plastic bags or sacks
- Staple gun
- Potting compost
- Lettuce seeds
- Water sprayer

1 If you're using a wooden planter, line it with plastic for protection against the elements. Fold down the sides of a black plastic bag so

it will fit neatly and staple it around the top of the structure. Make a few drainage holes at the bottom so the soil does not become waterlogged and unsuitable for growing.

2 Fill the planter with sieved compost and level the surface. Repeat with the tiers you want to grow lettuce in. Take the seeds in the palm of your hand, sprinkle them over the medium and cover with a little more soil. Remember to water sparingly to avoid seedling rot.

3 The seedlings should appear after a week or so. Water them with a sprayer rather than a watering can, which can be a little harsh.

AFTERCARE

As the seed start to sprout, thin them out to give the rest more room to develop. The plants that you pull out can be added to salads to reduce waste. Winter lettuce will need a very sheltered spot (a glasshouse is ideal), but covering the container with horticultural fleece or plastic in very cold weather will ensure that the crops continue to grow.

**"WHEN BUYING SEEDS, SELECT A VARIETY
SUITABLE FOR WINTER GROWING"**

BRUSSELS SPROUTS
AT A GLANCE

Sow: March-April

Harvest: August-February

— PLOT TO PLATE —

Brussels sprouts

To harvest these delicious little buttons, start from the sprouts lowest down on the stem, snapping them off cleanly. You can also use the Brussels top, which is a flavour-packed addition to any meal and can be used in the same way as other greens.

Recipes overleaf ➤



SPROUT, HAM & CHESTNUT GRATIN

SERVES 2

- Large knob of butter
- About 250g cooked Brussels sprouts
- Up to 100g cooked ham, bacon, chipolatas or stuffing
- Up to 100g cooked chestnuts, roughly crumbled
- Splash of chicken or veg stock, white wine or water (about 50ml)
- 2-3 tablespoons crème fraîche or cream
- About 30g well-flavoured hard cheese (or cheeses), grated
- About 30g fairly coarse breadcrumbs
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- Thyme leaves to garnish (optional)

1 Preheat the oven to 180°C/Fan 160°C. Use some of the butter to grease a gratin dish.

2 Roughly chop or slice the cooked Brussels sprouts. Cut the meat and stuffing, if using, into bite-sized pieces.

3 In a large bowl, combine the sprouts, meat and stuffing, if using, and the chestnuts. Season with a little salt and pepper. Add the stock, wine or water, and the cream or crème fraîche and stir through.

4 Transfer the mixture to the prepared dish and spread evenly.

5 Combine the cheese and breadcrumbs and sprinkle over the surface. Cut the remaining butter into slivers and dot over the topping.

6 Bake for 15 minutes, or until the gratin is hot right through. If the cheesy topping is not golden brown, finish off under a hot grill.

7 Serve scattered with some thyme leaves, if you like, and grind over some pepper.



TAMARI GREENS WITH CASHEWS AND GINGER

SERVES 4

- 200-250g cooked green cabbage or Brussels sprouts, roughly shredded
- 2 tablespoons sesame seeds
- Small handful of coriander, roughly chopped
- ½-1 teaspoon dried chilli flakes, or finely chopped red chilli (optional)
- 50g cashew nuts, lightly toasted

FOR THE DRESSING

- 1-2 tablespoons lime juice or lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon sesame oil
- Dash of tamari or soy sauce
- Dash of mirin
- About teaspoon finely grated ginger
- ½-1 garlic clove, grated
- Pinch of brown sugar

1 Put the cabbage/sprouts into a serving bowl.

2 To make the dressing, shake all the ingredients together in a screw-topped jar until thoroughly blended, or whisk together to combine.

3 Put a small frying pan over a medium heat, add the sesame seeds and gently toast until golden, shaking the pan to ensure they don't burn. This should only take a minute or two.

4 Tip the toasted seeds into the bowl with the cabbage or Brussels sprouts.

5 Add the coriander and chilli flakes if using, trickle over the dressing and toss to combine. Add the toasted cashews and toss the greens again before serving.

6 Add the coriander and chilli flakes if using, trickle over the dressing and toss to combine. Add the toasted before serving.

“ROUGHLY CHOP OR SLICE THE COOKED BRUSSELS SPROUTS”



*Recipes taken from
River Cottage Love
Your Leftovers by
Hugh Fearnley-
Whittingstall
(Bloomsbury, £20)*

10 GREAT WAYS TO EAT YOUR BRUSSELS SPROUTS

- 1 Glazed sprouts with crispy bacon
- 2 Spicy penne with chilli and sprouts
- 3 Brussels sprout pizza
- 4 Shaved sprout and kale salad with smashed walnuts
- 5 Brussels sprout fried rice
- 6 Roasted sprout and gruyere quiche
- 7 Roasted cauliflower and sprouts
- 8 Curried sprouts
- 9 Spicy beef and stir-fried sprouts
- 10 Bubble and squeak





LIVE THE GOOD LIFE

Keeping GOATS

Looking for ways to become more self-sufficient? Keeping goats could be the way forward, as small holding expert **Suzie Baldwin** explains

Goats are quick-witted, quick-footed and produce fantastic meat and milk. The meat is often overlooked, but it is low in cholesterol, high in iron and has less fat than a chicken carcass. The milk is said to be great for people with skin allergies and the cheese is delicious.

If you're raising goats for eating, the age at which they'll be ready for slaughter will vary depending on their breed, the weather, their feed and environment, but I would expect most to be ready at about seven to 10 months. These animals can breed from about seven months onwards, but I usually wait until they are 12 months old. They will give you milk as soon as they have given birth – I leave my kids to feed from the mum until they are eight weeks old, when they are weaned. I can

then continue to milk the doe for almost a year if I'm lucky. Goats can live for 10 to 12 years – some have been known to live to 30!

HOUSING

The most important job to do before getting your goats is to sort out fencing. They are real escape artists, and if there is a way to get out, rest assured they will find it! It is much better to invest the time and money on fencing than to cut corners and find yourself constantly chasing after an escapee.

If you have any trees in your paddock that you do not want eaten, you will need to protect them with extra fencing. Remember that goats love browsing (eating leaves and twigs from trees and shrubs) rather than grazing (eating grass).

The paddock should be sheltered and shaded – heatstroke is a risk in hot weather. Provide areas of interest, such as logs to climb on, or old tyres, and change things around from time to time to keep them stimulated.

Shelter is very important for goats, as they really dislike rain and draughts. Ideally, the shelter needs to be within the fenced paddock and should be moveable. This way, when the ground outside the shelter becomes waterlogged, you can move it to a less muddy patch, which keeps everything manageable.

The shelter should be big enough for your goats to lie down in and move around freely. They prefer to be outside to graze every day, all year round, but on rainy days you may have to keep them inside and provide them with mental stimulation and extra hay.

Drinking buckets can be placed on the floor or fixed in special brackets – the buckets drop into the brackets and are secure, eliminating spillages. Hay racks are ideal for goats and keep the hay dry and clean. Just refill them as needed. Never use

hay nets with horned goats, as they will get tangled and stuck in them, which can cause injuries and sometimes death.

FEEDING

Like sheep, goats are ruminants. They are browsers and really enjoy foraging for their own food.

I keep their hay racks topped up every day and also provide additional foods such as blackberries, brambles, elder and apple twigs, sloe, hawthorn, willow and hazel. In the harsh winter months, or when goats are in kid or being milked, feed intake needs to be increased.

Goats should also have some pelleted food morning and evening. You can buy specific feed depending on what you are keeping them for. These ensure the goats are getting sufficient vitamins and minerals, but remember that they still need to forage and, during the winter months when this is more difficult, you may need to supplement their feed with hay. You can also get mineral licks for goats to give them a nutritional boost.

If your goats are browsing freely, please be aware that rhododendron, laurel, yew, bracken, foxglove, nightshade and ragwort are poisonous, as are some other plants. To be on the safe side, you should regard any cultivated garden plants as unsuitable.

HEALTH

All livestock should be checked daily, ideally morning and evening. Take time to get to

“SHELTER IS VERY IMPORTANT FOR GOATS, AS THEY REALLY DISLIKE RAIN AND DRAUGHTS”

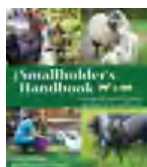
know your animals, as determining what is normal behaviour goes a long way in ascertaining their well-being.

Goats will require regular worming and feet trimming. They can pick up ticks, lice and fleas and occasionally fly strike, a particularly horrible condition where blowflies lay their eggs in the goat's fleece. If you groom your animals from an early age, they will be very amenable. A healthy goat will be bright and alert. There should be no discharge from the nose, and their coat should be clean, glossy and manageable.

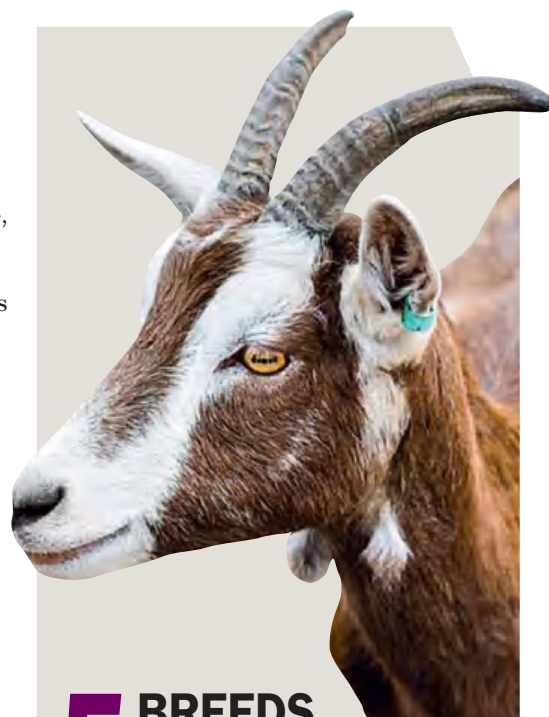
LEGAL GUIDELINES

There are some legal guidelines to be aware of when keeping goats as if you wish to keep legged animals (goats, pigs, cows, sheep, etc.) or a substantial number of poultry (over 50 birds), you will need to obtain a County Parish Holding number, and a unique herd/flock number for your records.

If you plan to sell products, such as cheese, made with your goat's milk, there are various laws and regulations that you will need to be aware of. For details visit gov.uk



Extract edited from The Smallholder's Handbook by Suzie Baldwin. Published by Kyle Books, priced £18.99. Photography by Rachel Warne.



5 BREEDS TO CONSIDER

BEFORE YOU SELECT THE BREED OF GOAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO KEEP, CONSIDER HOW MUCH SPACE AND TIME YOU HAVE AVAILABLE, AND, MOST IMPORTANTLY, WHAT YOU WANT TO KEEP THEM FOR, WHETHER IT BE MILK, MEAT OR FLEECE.

Anglo Nubian

This is a really sweet-natured goat and highly intelligent. It is a multi-purpose breed – great for milk production, producing excellent-tasting cheese, but also makes a fine carcass.

British Saanen

These dairy goats produce the most milk of all breeds. They should provide about 5-10 litres a day. Their calm, gentle manner makes them a great goat to start out with. Being white, they are sensitive to excessive sunlight, so adequate shade is a must for these animals.

British Toggenburg

These are relatively small goats and are friendly, alert and extremely active. They are popular with smallholders for good, persistent milk production.

LaMancha

These calm, hardy and manageable goats were first developed in the US. They are known for their small, shrivelled, almost non-existent ears, and are great for milk and produce a good-sized carcass.

Golden Guernsey

These lovely-natured goats are docile and intelligent. Their feed intake tends to be lower than that of other breeds, but in spite of this they produce tasty milk with a high cream content.



January's ALLOTMENT INSPIRATION



Find out about great plots across the country
and some top tips from growers

PLOT ADVICE

PLOT SIZES



The National Allotment Society
National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners Ltd

The National Allotment Society recommends that the 'ten rod plot' (or its nearest metric equivalent of 250m²) is preserved as the template for the subdivision of allotment land. Splitting up large plots is often done to make this type of gardening accessible to more groups of people. For working men, women and families, finding the time to cultivate this space along with other daily duties can be daunting. There are also many single people with allotments who do not need the space to feed others. These are the main reasons why modern day

plots need to offer a choice of sizes to suit the requirements of prospective gardeners.

In response to this issue, the subdivision of large plots which have fallen vacant due to various circumstances is recognised by the NAS as a short-term solution to waiting lists. However, it is to be undertaken alongside continuing efforts to expand the supply of land available for allotment gardening. If you're waiting for an allotment and feel this is an issue worth pursuing with your local council, visit nsalg.org.uk for more guidance and information.

RSPB CALLS FOR BIRD-FRIENDLY GARDENERS

Bird lovers can do their bit to record numbers of our feathered friends by joining in with the Big Garden Bird Watch, which takes place between January 30 and 31, 2016. Gardeners from across the UK have been asked to spare just one hour over this weekend to record how many different species of bird visit their growing space. This activity helps the RSPB to collect data which is then shared on their website to give the public more information about the species that are struggling, and what can be done to help. Birds are a form of natural pest-control for organic gardeners, and will feast on slugs, snails and other harmful insects if you encourage them to your plot. For more information on this fantastic cause, visit rspb.org.uk



STOCK UP

Before the season gets off to a flying start, take a look at your plastic pots. These containers are easily damaged, so check what needs replacing now.

FORUM Q&As

We asked our forum...

Q What are your New Year's growing resolutions?

"Last year was my first season and I had success with the majority of my crops. Next year I'll be trying an alternative radish, as I didn't think 'French Breakfast 3' had much taste. I also plan to plant more in succession as I was worried about failures and sowed a lot at once, which resulted in gluts."

Root66, via the GYO website

"I'm going to keep peas in their own bed instead of mixing them with my beans as it was problematic keeping them all netted. I'm lucky enough to have a second greenhouse which I'm reserving for growing melons."

Norfolkgrey, via the GYO website

Pupils asked to GET PLANTING

A primary school-based growing project called Grow Your Own Potatoes is encouraging pupils from across the country to get involved with edible gardening. The organisation aims to teach children in the UK about where potatoes come from and how they get from the plot to our plates. Schools are required to register by Friday, January 29, 2016, and those who do will receive a kit containing

everything needed to plant these tasty tubers, including a complete growing guide. Prizes are available for the nation's highest quality tubers and the heaviest yields, which should help encourage the next generation of gardeners. Keen participants can find out more information and a registration form at gyop.potato.org.uk



Dorchester



JANUARY JOBS

- Plan what you're going to grow this year by noting it down in a journal or doing a quick sketch. Ask your allotment neighbours what varieties worked well for them last season if you're struggling for inspiration.
- If you don't already have them, consider installing water butts on your community site to build up a decent supply before summer. You'll be glad of this preparation if there's a drought.
- Lift and divide clumps of rhubarb. If the variety has been particularly productive, why not offer some of the split plants to fellow allotmenters?



PLOT SHOWCASE

DORCHESTER, DORSET

A blossoming partnership has recently formed in Dorchester to benefit the local community. Future Roots, a social enterprise that focuses on bringing a positive purpose to vulnerable adults who are struggling with transitions, has set up a four-acre plot in Whitfield. It's here that the volunteers, known as the Countrymen's Club grow a wide range of veg to supply the nearby Engine Room restaurant with fresh produce.

Poundbury Gardens is home to The Engine Room and also runs three award-winning centres. In exchange for the regular deliveries of veg, the company has provided the Future Roots site with vouchers to spend on materials in order to continue their brilliant work.

Founder of Future Roots Julie Plumley commented on the accomplishments of the group: "The mix of fresh air, exercise, like-minded people and purposeful activity is a recipe for good mental and physical health. Many of the participants at Future Roots Whitfield have dementia or a brain injury and it's great to involve them in the growing process. It's so rewarding for the Countrymen's Club to have their fruit and vegetables purchased by The Gardens Group, and the vouchers they earn from the sales gives them an opportunity to reinvest in growing or to give something back to their carers, which is a wonderful feeling. We hope to expand and improve our vegetable selection so that The Gardens Group can offer a full menu using our produce."

"I must remember to label things in the new season. Although it's a nice surprise waiting to see what a plant becomes, not knowing what they are from the beginning causes havoc and space problems when I try and organise my growing year."

Lumpy, via the GYO website

Did you know?

According to the National Allotment Society, the number of allotment plots across the UK reached 1.5 million after the 1940s Dig for Victory campaign. Nowadays, figures are approximately 330,000, with a need for a further 90,000 plots to meet the rising demands of this rewarding lifestyle.





Helping garden birds THROUGH WINTER



RSPB wildlife adviser **Tom Waters** provides his expert tips for helping our feathered friends through the colder months

Now that winter is upon us there are many things you can do in your garden or on the allotment to help birds through this challenging time. Providing access to suet sprinkles, fat balls and sunflower hearts creates essential sources of energy when natural food is scarce. You can also use food from your own cupboards and fridge with treats like pastries made with real fats, cooked potatoes, porridge oats and mild grated cheese. Keeping feeders clean is important all year round and the chilled conditions won't stop germs spreading. Clear up spilt seeds and leftover scraps that haven't been touched for a while, but it's best not to put them on compost heaps as this can cause germination and also attract unwanted visitors such as mice and rats.

HOW TO HELP

Hopefully your efforts to give wildlife a home will result in lots of activity. Goldfinches will flock to seed heads you have left standing, and when there is a surplus, allow some to bolt so you have a sustainable crop ready to

sow next season. Remember, at times of frost and snow the food we provide could be the difference between life and death.

Now that the soil is hard, it's a good idea to put out any berries or other leftover yields onto the lawn for blackbirds, thrushes and if you're lucky, fieldfares. They appear during the colder months and are usually attracted to windfall fruit – these thrushes, along with redwings, come to the UK from their breeding grounds in northern Europe.

CREATING A BIRD-FRIENDLY PLOT

It is a good idea to trim back any hedges and trees that need it (once the fruit has all gone) before March, as birds will start to breed in spring and shouldn't be disturbed. Nest boxes will need to be installed by February, so put them up in a quiet place on the plot. It needs to be up high and away from shelter so that cats don't have a perfect hidden vantage point. Evergreens like holly and ivy are ideal for giving nature a home on those winter nights and the wrens will be grateful if you have roosting pockets in there, too.

Water is also really important during low temperatures and even a small bird bath can be useful. Make sure they are kept frost-free without adding chemicals such as glycerine, anti-freeze or salt as they could stop the birds' feathers from being waterproof, or poison the liquid. It is tricky to keep the water from turning to ice but a small ball or cork placed in the bath will just agitate the surface enough to prevent this. Alternatively, try lining it with a polythene sheet as this can easily be removed and replaced when fresh water is needed.



GET INVOLVED

Why not help give nature a home by joining in with the Big Garden Birdwatch? The event takes place on January 30-31, 2016, and you just need to spend one hour noting the birds you see in your garden or local outside space (find out more on page 85). For further details, go to rspb.org.uk



Bulldog
Wigan, England Since 1780

Strength • British-Heritage • Reliability
bulldogtools.co.uk

Digging made easy



... with the Backsaver Autospade

We're all used to normal digging - it's hard work!
With the Backsaver Autospade you dig from a standing position: there is no need to bend to lift and turn the soil.
You will dig up to twice as fast and without the strain on your back.

- Twice the speed
- No back strain
- Less effort

Backsaver Garden Tools Ltd, Leeds
Tel: 01943 870486

Buy online at www.backsavgardentools.co.uk



The **ONLY** **2 YEAR GUARANTEE**
Cat Deterrent

tested and approved by the RSPB

Protect birds
and gardens
from cats
all year round

For **FREE** brochure and
friendly impartial advice

01438 727183



BRITISH
MADE

**FREE
DELIVERY**

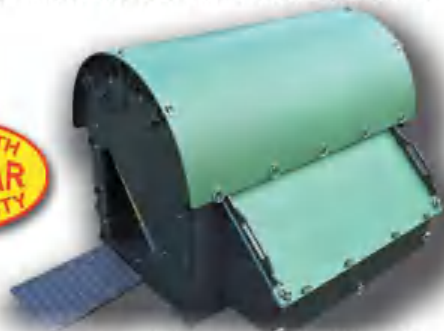
Concept Research
CATWatch

Additional deterrents available to deter
Foxes, Mice, and Pine Martens
www.conceptresearch.co.uk



POULTRY HOUSING IN RECYCLED PLASTIC

NOW WITH
**10 YEAR
WARRANTY**



**FIGHT
RED MITE**

Your best defence against Red Mite
No maintenance & easy to clean
Robust and highly practical
Designed and made in the UK



We also make housing for pigs, ducks, geese
and much more. See the complete range at:

www.greenfrogdesigns.co.uk

Green Frog Designs Ltd., The Empire Farm, Throop Road, Templecombe, Somerset, BA8 0HR
Tel: 01963 371563 Email: sales@greenfrogdesigns.co.uk

MARRIAGE'S



High in energy for
winter warmth

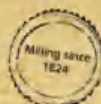


Encourages
natural behaviour



Keep your birds warm this winter by feeding a
quality mixed corn, high in energy. We use
the best British cleaned wheat and carefully
cut non-GM maize. Offer this treat after the
morning feed of pellets or mash. An ideal
foraging feed for all poultry.

Please contact us for further information:
01245 612019 www.marriages.co.uk





Bringing you high quality wildlife products

to help you care for the mammals, amphibians, insects and birds that surround us.

For a **10% discount** exclusive to readers please enter code **UKGYOW15** at checkout

FOR ALL THE PRODUCTS FEATURED, MORE INFORMATION AND TO PLACE AN ORDER PLEASE VISIT
WWW.BIRDFOOD.CO.UK/GROWYOUROWN15
 OR FREEPHONE 0800 731 2820



SAVE £££s SAVE £££s

JANUARY COMPETITIONS

SAVE £££s SAVE £££s

WIN GREAT PRIZES!

Bag some amazing garden goodies by entering this month's giveaways

SAVE £££s SAVE £££s SAVE £££s SAVE £££s SAVE £££s SAVE £££s SAVE £££s SAVE £££s



Win!

A GARDEN FURNITURE SET AND TROWELS

Give your edible garden a beautiful boost with this fabulous outdoor furniture collection from Internet Gardener, or upgrade your tool kit with a stainless steel hand trowel. These are the prizes you could win by entering this brilliant competition with a total value of £900. The maze rattan natural Milan rounded sofa set has deep seats for extra comfort and an aluminium frame with a hand-woven, all-weather rattan covering. This prize includes a two-seat sofa measuring 145cm x 82cm x

71cm, two sofa armchairs with dimensions of 80cm x 82cm x 71cm and a coffee table measuring 90cm x 71cm x 42cm. Chair covers come in apple green or beige to suit your growing space and this set will provide a luxurious area where you can sit back and admire your hard work.

If your tool collection is in need of improvement, then the Gardman Moulton Mill stainless steel hand trowel will be a welcomed addition. The ash handle provides maximum comfort and it comes with a leather strap so you can hang it up for easy storage. The length is 32cm, so it is the perfect size for a range of tasks on the plot.

Internet Gardener has teamed up with GYO to provide one lucky winner with their own rounded sofa set, and five runners up receiving a quality stainless steel trowel that's great for a range of gardening tasks. For more information, go to the website at internetgardener.co.uk

Prize worth
£900



SAVE £££s SAVE £££s SAVE £££s SAVE £££s SAVE £££s SAVE £££s SAVE £££s SAVE £££s

Win!

GREENTHUMB LAWN TREATMENT

An attractive edible garden wouldn't be complete without a healthy lawn to border the rows of fruit and veg. You could enjoy luscious grass this year as GreenThumb is looking to celebrate with *GYO* readers after reaching 30 years in the industry. Enter this competition and you could win one of 30 seasonal lawn treatments that will be applied to your growing space by an expert. The product is applicable to lawn sizes of up to 100m². However, for larger spaces, the remaining area will be payable at a discounted rate.

With so many prizes available there's even more reason to get involved. GreenThumb offer a wide range of treatments including lawn renovation, post scarification and seasonal boosts. For more information visit greenthumb.co.uk

Prize
worth
£600



Win!

AMELIE DESIGN PLANTERS

Growers with limited gardening space or those looking for a feature will benefit from a planter from Amelie Design. These beautiful two-and-three-tiered products are perfect for cultivating your own edibles. The containers are made from powder-coated, galvanised steel and aluminium that's resistant to water and sun damage, as well as rust and rot. There are 12 main colours available, but if customers want a unique shade, Amelie Design will do its very best to meet their wishes. Get involved with our competition and you could be enjoying this great piece of equipment.

Amelie Design is giving away one two-tiered planter and one three-tiered planter to two lucky *GYO* readers! The two-tiered planter measures 52cm x 52cm x 90cm, while the three-tiered product has dimensions of 52cm x 52cm x 147cm. For more information, visit amelie-design.co.uk



HOW TO ENTER

If you fancy getting your hands on one of the amazing prizes this month, follow the simple instructions on page 96 or enter via our website which can be found at growfruitandveg.co.uk/competitions

Good luck!

SAVE £££s SAVE £££s SAVE £££s SAVE £££s SAVE £££s SAVE £££s SAVE £££s SAVE £££s

Win!

RAINWATER TERRACE PLANTERS

Grow your edibles in a stylish Rainwater Terrace water butt with vertical garden. The 200-litre and 134-litre water butts have clip-on planters that can hold crops such as lettuce and spinach. This system keeps the soil suitably moist by allowing the supply of collected rain water to gradually seep through to water the planters. Get involved by entering our competition and one of these nifty products could be yours!

GYO has teamed up with Rainwater Terrace to provide the first place winner with a three-tiered 200 litre product worth £179, and the runner up with a two-tiered 134 litre water butt worth £129. Both prizes are available in a range of colours to suit your preference, including bright green and black, dark green, black and terracotta. For more information visit rainwater-terrace.com



Prize worth
£308

Prize worth
£284



Win!

A PLANTABOX PERSONALISED CRATE

Looking for a gift for a loved one, or want an original container to grow your favourite crops? Then look no further than the personalised wooden planter crate from Plantabox. This product is available in 10 colours, including pink, blue, green and silver. The dimensions are 53cm x 36cm x 26cm and the box is made from sustainable FSC pine, making it ideal for cultivating a range of fruit and veg. Enter this competition and you could win one of your own.

Plantabox is giving five large personalised planter crates to GYO readers, along a set of wheels and a collection of seeds and plant markers to get started. Each prize is worth £56.80 – to find more information on this product, go to plantabox.co.uk

Win!

HUMBLE BY NATURE COURSES

Learn to design and plant an edible garden with the help of Humble by Nature in the Wye Valley, Wales. This month, two GYO winners have the chance to win a slot on the one-day course taking place on April 16, 2016, that covers the aesthetic and practical elements of growing your own. Find out how farm's edible garden was designed and learn the basic principles of forest gardening and permaculture. The prize also includes an overnight stay at the Hayloft, which is a bright and airy studio apartment with views across the picturesque fields.

Please note that this course cannot be exchanged for another and the winners are responsible for their own transport to and from the farm. For more information about this exciting prize, visit humblebynature.com



Prize worth
£265

SAVE £££s SAVE £££s SAVE £££s SAVE £££s SAVE £££s SAVE £££s SAVE £££s SAVE £££s

SAVE £££s SAVE £££s

YOUR JANUARY

SAVE £££s SAVE £££s

DISCOUNTS

Our selection of savings will get the New Year off to a great start!

SAVE £££s SAVE £££s SAVE £££s SAVE £££s SAVE £££s SAVE £££s SAVE £££s

GARDENER'S SKIN CARE COLLECTION

This protective set from herbal beauty specialist Martha Hill features five products to help prevent sore, chapped skin. They provide protection from the harsh winter elements on the plot. The set includes a 150ml evening primrose cleanser, 50ml nourishing night cream, 100ml gardener's hand cream, 100ml foot treatment cream plus a free gift of 50ml evening primrose daytime moisturiser, worth £8.20. GYO readers can purchase this collection for a special discounted price of £18.25, a huge 50 per cent off the original cost, plus free delivery. **To claim this offer, use the special website extension beautynaturals.com/gyo, or free phone 0800 980 6665 and quote the phrase 'Grow Your Own'.**



Save
50%



ALLOTMENT SET

Prepare for the year ahead with this extensive kit. It has everything you need to get started for the season, including a wooden dibber, plant markers, hanging tags and garden twine, which are all presented in a beautiful tin that's perfect for storing your fruit and veg seeds. The original price of this collection is £18.95, but GYO readers can claim an exclusive 10 per cent discount, making the final cost £17.06. **To take advantage of this offer, simply enter the code GYO16A at the check out. For more information, visit gardendivas.co.uk**



Save
10%

ALLOTMENT HANDBOOK & PLANNER

Stay organised on the plot this year with this brilliant guide. *The RHS Allotment Handbook and Planner* contains advice for growing a range of fruit and veg as well as a monthly chart of tasks. It has everything you need to keep track of your crops to maximise your chances of bumper harvests. You'll also find a collection of tried and tested varieties which should help to avoid gardening mishaps. Octopus Books is providing a 10 per cent discount on this product, reducing the original price of £12.99 to £11.70. **Call 01903 828 503, quoting Allotment/MB633 to claim this offer.** To find out more, visit octopusbooks.co.uk



Save
10%

SLATE CHALKBOARD

January is a busy time for gardeners, so make sure your to-do list is visible at all times by bringing a slate chalkboard from Roman at Home to your plot. The fantastic collection includes dog bone, welly, scottie dog, house and cat design options to make your board more personal. This selection of uniquely-shaped slate plaques and chalkboards can also be added to your home as a stylish decoration. **An exclusive 10 per cent discount is available to claim across this range – simply enter the code RAHSLATE10 at the checkout. For more information, visit [Roman at Home](http://romanathome.com) online at romanathome.com**



Save
10%

SAVE £££s SAVE £££s SAVE £££s SAVE £££s SAVE £££s

SAVE £££s SAVE £££s

Get Christmas wrapped up.

FROM ONLY £24.99* FOR ANY SUBSCRIPTION



Gorgeous knits with every pattern packed issue



Every issue comes with an exclusive knitting and crochet kit



Brimming with inspired projects for clothing, home décor and more



Packed with projects, tips and tricks, plus free crafty gifts



Packed with creative ideas for your home



For makers who love paper



Packed full of projects and inspiration for your exclusive bumper craft kit



Grow delicious fresh food in your own garden



Full of delicious meat-free recipes



Packed with workout plans, top tips and new fitness ideas



Complementary therapies for the mind, body and soul



For those who love eating, drinking and shopping for British Food



Timeless style for your home and garden



Your spiritual life coach

ACEVILLE.COM/XMAS15 01795 414964 QUOTE XMAS15

Lines are open Monday-Friday 8am-8pm, Saturday 9am-1pm

Terms and Conditions apply, see online for full details. To guarantee delivery of your gift card before Christmas, orders must be placed/received by 10th December 2015. This offer closes 24th December. Subscriptions will start January 2016



FREE BOOK

WE'RE GIVING AWAY A FREE COPY OF THE GARDENERS YEAR BY PIPPA GREENWOOD



GROWING LEEKS

ALL THE ADVICE YOU NEED FOR CULTIVATING, CARING FOR AND HARVESTING THIS DELICIOUS CROP

Coming Next Month

FEBRUARY ISSUE ON SALE DECEMBER 31

PLUS!

GREENHOUSE TOMATOES

USEFUL TIPS FOR MAKING THE MOST OF THIS VERSATILE VEG FROM SALLY NEX

CROP ROTATION

A COMPLETE GUIDE TO THIS IMPORTANT GROWING PRACTICE TO HELP YOU GET THE MOST FROM YOUR GROWING SPACE



SWEET PEPPERS

A COMPLETE RUN-THROUGH OF THE BASICS FOR GROWING THIS REWARDING VEG



PLANTING PEARS

MAKE YOUR PLOT A LITTLE MORE FRUITY WITH THE ADDITION OF THESE JUICY YIELDS

Fence Accessories

FENCEBUFFER
Choice of 3 colours

Enough for 5 panels

£5.00 inc VAT
plus postage and packaging

Tel/Fax: 0113 239 3636

Email: mk.precision.tooling@btconnect.com

**STOPPS RATTLING
FENCE PANELS**

PayPal
also on ebay

Fruit Trees

Adams Apples Apple Trees from £8.00

Over 100 varieties.
Dessert, juicing, cider,
cookers to suit your farm,
smallholding or garden.
Many other fruit trees and
bushes.

Advice and Catalogues.
Tel: 01404 841166

Order online www.adamsappletrees.co.uk

THORNHAYES NURSERY
QUALITY FRUIT TREES FROM DEVON

Buy direct from the nursery Monday to Saturday. Visit us
for our fruit demonstration areas and our expert advice
Buy online or by phone. Friendly advice by phone or email always given.
Full range of top fruit supplied.
Also hedging and other tree products

www.thornhayes-nursery.co.uk
Thornhayes Nursery, Dulford, Cullompton,
Devon EX15 2DF Tel: 01884 266746

NATIONAL FRUIT SPECIALISTS

Over 300 Apple tree varieties alone plus Cherry, Plum, Pear, Peach, Nuts etc. Also a huge
selection of Soft Fruit plants as well as Grape Vines, Kiwis, Hops, Figs and so much more!

DEACONS NURSERY (GYO), GODSHILL, ISLE OF WIGHT PO38 3HW
Tel: 01983 840750/01983 522243
info@deaconsnurseryfruits.co.uk

NATIONWIDE DELIVERY

www.deaconsnurseryfruits.co.uk

10% Online Discount Redeem code **RHS1516**

Providing the UK's largest range of fruit
trees and soft fruit plants. from a leading
specialist nursery www.blackmoor.co.uk

blackmoor

LodgeFarm Plants

Lodge Farm Plants specialise in fruit trees, ornamental trees,
native trees and soft fruit as well as hedging. UK grown.
Sales from farm in Warwickshire or courier service.

Visit www.lodgefarm-plants.com **Lodge Farm Plants**
or call 07977 631368 for more information

Fruit Cages

KNOWLE NETS
Fruit & Vegetable Cages - Polytunnels - Cloches -
Pond Nets - Poultry Nets - Garden Netting

FREE CATALOGUE & SAMPLES: 01308 424342
info@knowlenets.co.uk www.knowlenets.co.uk

Greenhouses

GREENHOUSES
Factory Direct Prices

Ring now for a FREE
Greenhouse Buyer's Guide
www.thegreenhousepeople.co.uk

0800 093 3295

The Greenhouse People Ltd
Blythe Park, Cresswell,
Stoke-on-Trent, ST11 9RD

**The largest range of
greenhouses**

Installation
service
available

Free Brochure
01363 84948

freephone **0800 9804732** for expert advice
www.isgreenhouses.co.uk enquiries@isgreenhouses.co.uk
Plakiers Green North Somerset BS40 8BH

Hand Cream

DermaGuard

Discover the difference ...
..... Your hands will love it!

**Skin protection lotion -
a gardener's best friend!**

250ml.....£6.50 or 500ml.....£12.00

**POST
FREE!**

The Skin Care Company Ltd, St Asaph, LL17 0HH.
FREE Order Hotline: 0800 917 2219
www.dermaguard.com

Polytunnels

Five Star Polytunnels

We manufacture and supply well designed easy to
assemble quality polytunnels & accessories
Widths: 10, 12, 14, 18 & 24 feet • Lengths: 10-100 feet
• Polythene • Crop Bars • Doors etc.

**Friendly &
helpful service**

Ring for **FREE** Brochure • Cellan, Lampeter, Ceredigion, Wales SA48 8HU
Tel: 01570 421580 • E-mail: sales@fivestarpolytunnels.co.uk • www.fivestarpolytunnels.co.uk

Garden Accessories

The Lichfield Planter Company
Handcrafted wooden accessories made to order
for both ornamental and vegetable gardens

www.thelichfieldplantercompany.co.uk
sales@thelichfieldplantercompany.co.uk
Phone Maggie on 01952 541170

**Two Wests
& Elliott**

**Quality Equipment
for Greenhouse & Garden**

Staging • Plant Pots • Propagators
Thermometers • Shelving • Cloches
Raised Beds • Composters • Pest
Control • Fruit Cages • Heaters
Watering Systems • Cold Frames
Greenhouses • Polytunnels

FREE Catalogue
OVER 2000 Quality Products

01246 451077
www.twowests.co.uk
Two Wests (GY), Carrwood Road,
Sheepbridge, Chesterfield, S41 9RH

Polytunnels

Ferryman Polytunnels

Polytunnels from £345
Replacement Covers
Accessories and Spares

Free Brochure
Ferryman Polytunnels, Westleigh,
Morchard Road, EX17 5LS.
01363 84948
info@ferrymanpolytunnels.co.uk
www.ferrymanpolytunnels.co.uk

Seaweed Feed

Maxicrop

Our seaweed makes the difference ...

Plants do better with **Maxicrop** ... naturally

Available from most garden
centres (including Wyvales)
and online at
www.capitalgardens.co.uk

**To advertise
here
call Dan
on
01206 505950**

Seeds

AP GROWERS

We supply a wide range of unusual flower, fruit, vegetable and herb seeds. No fancy packaging, just great value quality seeds. We also grow many of the seeds we sell as small plug plants.

www.ajpgrowers.co.uk

Sea Spring Seeds

For vegetables that work

All varieties trialled by us for flavour, quality and yield. Great selection of tomatoes and salad crops. Specialists in chillies and sweet peppers; we sell both seeds and plug plants.

To understand our online catalogue

www.seaspringseeds.co.uk

Everything you need in our NEW comprehensive 2016 catalogue

Finest quality seeds and real value for money

2016

More choices for autumn planting

Call 01376 570000 or go to our website www.kingsseeds.com to order your copy now

ROBINSON'S VEGETABLE SEEDS AND PLANTS

TOP QUALITY NATURALLY GROWN

Tomatoes, Beans, Artichokes, Asparagus, Rhubarb, Chillies and much more. Plus our famous MAMMOTH ONIONS AND LEEKS.

Write, phone or email for your free 2016 catalogue

W Robinson & Son (Seeds & Plants) Ltd, Sunny Bank, Forton, Preston PR3 0BN
Tel. 01524 791210

www.mammothonion.co.uk
Email info@mammothonion.co.uk

Find us on [facebook/mammothvegetables](https://www.facebook.com/mammothvegetables)

Established and family owned since 1860

Marshall's

The NEW Autumn Catalogue **OUT NOW!**

MARSHALLS IS THE FIRST CHOICE FOR AWARD-WINNING VEGETABLES AND LOVERS OF REAL FOOD.

- Save up to 20% on Vegetable Seeds when you buy 6 packets or more
- Seed Potatoes - Bigger Range, Lower Prices and Larger Packs available
- FREE Propagator with our Seed Collections
- 100% satisfaction guaranteed for peace of mind

To take advantage of the latest offers, request your FREE Marshall's Catalogue today at www.marshall-seeds.co.uk or call 0844 557 6792

Nicky's NURSERY

Looking for quality and service for your growing season?

We have one of the UK's largest collection of chilli and tomato seeds, vegetable seeds, wild flower mixes, garden games, oriental veg, flower seeds, herbs seeds, grass mixes and much more. We stock some of the worlds hottest chillies including Carolina Reaper, Moruga Scorpion and Butch T. Call or order online.

www.nickys-nursery.co.uk Tel/fax 01843 600972

SHOW TICKETS OFFER!

THE EDIBLE GARDEN
11th to 13th March 2016

Come along to the The Edible Garden Show and see Christine Walkden. Christine will be appearing twice on our Main Stage on Sunday 13th March. GYO Readers can get two tickets for just £18.00 when quoting GYO18, saving £14.00 on the door prices. Offer valid until 11th March 2016.

CALL TO ORDER 2015/16 CATALOGUE NOW

Oriental, ordinary vegetables, herbs and flowers. Natural predators.

Wallis Seeds

GYO, Broads Green, Gt. Waltham, Chelmsford, Essex CM3 1DS
Tel: 01245 360 413
www.wallis-seeds.co.uk
Email www.info@wallis-seeds.co.uk

THE ALLOTMENTS & GARDENS COUNCIL (UK)

Societies join for just £1.00 per member. Individuals £10.00

Members across the UK, Ireland & the Channel Isles

Insurance scheme tailored to your needs, seed scheme. Incredible discounts, no minimum order to qualify. Legal help and assistance.

For further details, please email info@agc-uk.org or call 01245 360 413

Soil/Composting

JOIN THE COMPOSTING REVOLUTION

COMPOST ALL COOKED & UNCOOKED KITCHEN WASTE INCLUDING HEAT & FISH

Smart Soil Ltd

Telephone 01619 701108
www.smartsoil.co.uk

COMPETITION FORM

To be in with a chance of winning one of our fantastic prizes, correctly answer the question below by ticking the corresponding box then send us your completed form. You must also tick the boxes to indicate which giveaways you wish to enter. You may tick as many as you wish, but entries must be received by January 14, 2016. One photocopied or handwritten form per person is acceptable. Alternatively, you can enter online at growfruitandveg.co.uk

Which crop features on page 19 of the January issue of GYO?

- ☐ Aubergines ☐ Broad beans
☐ Fenugreek (Please tick).

Send your entries to: Grow Your Own, PO Box 443, Ipswich, Suffolk IP2 8WG

- ☐ INTERNET GARDENER OUTDOOR FURNITURE SET AND TROWELS
☐ GREEN THUMB LAWN TREATMENTS
☐ AMELIE DESIGN PLANTERS
☐ RAINWATER TERRACE PLANTERS
☐ PLANT A BOX PERSONALISED CRATE
☐ HUMBLE BY NATURE COURSE

Title _____ Forename _____ Surname _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Telephone* _____ Email _____

Favourite feature this issue _____

Male ☐ Female ☐ * To receive deliveries entrants must provide a daytime contact telephone number

Date of birth DD/MM/YY _____

Your details will be processed by Aceville Publications (publishers of *Grow Your Own*) in full accordance with data protection legislation. By entering this competition, you agree to Aceville Publications contacting you by post, phone, email and SMS for marketing purposes. All entries become the property of Aceville Publications, (publishers of *Grow Your Own*). Aceville Publications Ltd. and sister companies may wish to contact you with information of other services and publications we provide which may be of interest. Please tick here if you DO NOT wish to receive such information by Post ☐ Phone ☐ Email ☐ SMS ☐. From time to time Aceville Publications will share details with other reputable companies who provide products and services that may be of interest to you. Please tick here if you DO NOT wish to receive such information by Post ☐ Phone ☐ Email ☐ SMS ☐.


TERMS AND CONDITIONS

This competition is open to all UK residents aged 18 or over, excluding employees or agents of the associated companies and their families. One entry per person. The prizes detailed in each competition cannot be exchanged for goods, or towards the purchase of goods at any retail outlet. Entries must be on the coupon provided or online at growfruitandveg.co.uk/competitions. It cannot be exchanged for cash, or replaced if lost or damaged. Illegible entries and those that do not abide by these terms and conditions will be disqualified. Prizes must be taken as stated and cannot be deferred. The decision of the judge is final and no correspondence will be entered into. CLOSING DATE: January 14, 2016. Winners will be notified by post, a list of winners will be available in writing on request from Rachel Tudor, 21/23 Phoenix Court, Hawkins Road, Colchester, Essex. CO2 8YF

Website Directory

 **A Wright & Son Ltd**
MADE IN SHEFFIELD, ENGLAND
Est. since 1947 Tel: 0114 272 2677
A Wright & Son Limited, 158 Charles Street, Sheffield, S1 2NE Fax: 0114 278 7157
www.penknives-and-scissors.co.uk

Cold Frames & Mini greenhouses



Toughened safety glass 25 year framework guarantee

0800 298 6284 www.garden-products.co.uk
Access Garden Products, Dept GYO1549, Crick, NORTHAMPTON NN6 7XS

Hedging, fruit, herbs, & much more - visit -  **Buckingham Nurseries**
www.hedging.co.uk **01280 822133**

 **BULLDOG**
The Strongest Garden Tools
Hand made in England
www.bulldogtools.co.uk

 **Kitchen Gardener's & Bird Watcher's Logbooks**
www.coxton.alchemica.co.uk
Email: info@coxton.alchemica.co.uk
Coxton Publications Ltd. Tel: 01482 881833

 **Organic Plants**
Delfland Nurseries Limited Tel: 01354 740553 / 742029
Organic Vegetable, Salad, Ornamental & Herb Plants. Mail Order, Nursery Shop & Wholesale
www.organicplants.co.uk

www.garden-naturally.com

 **FREE CATALOGUE AVAILABLE**

Grow fruit and vegetables free from pest damage with our range of natural products.

For a free catalogue please visit the website, call 0845 680 0296 or 01285 654241

The unrivalled collection of heritage fruit trees
100% British from root to fruit
NATIONWIDE DELIVERY.
Contact us for this season's availability
Order early to avoid disappointment
www.brogdaleonline.co.uk
Telephone: 01795 531 888. Email: fruit@brogdaleonline.co.uk

 **grow at Brogdale**
AT THE HOME OF THE NATIONAL FRUIT COLLECTION

 **6x** EVERY DAY MORE GARDENERS ARE TURNING TO THE NATURAL WAY OF GROWING. . . . ORGANICALLY
6x is 100% Natural Fertiliser. The Best Thing On Earth!
If you have difficulties in locating 6x within your local garden centre, please contact us for your nearest stockist
www.6-x.co.uk • 01458 272202

JungleSeeds.co.uk

Traditional, Unusual Exotic Vegetables Fruit & Flower Seeds
01491 614765

Maxicrop®
Our seaweed makes the difference . . . 
Available from most garden centres (including Wyvales) and online at www.capitalgardens.co.uk

www.meadowinmygarden.co.uk

Flower Meadow Seeds for every garden
Mixes to suit all soils and aspects
Telephone **01380 724963**

 **Sow now - Local Garlic and Broad Beans**
Franchi Seeds 1783
www.seedsofitaly.com
0208 427 5020

 **Vigo Presses**
01404 890093
www.vigopresses.co.uk

Soft Fruit Plants

Strawberry Plants Organic & Low-Input
Raspberry Canes PHPS Certified Healthy
Bare root and sold direct welshfruitstocks.co.uk **01497 851209**

 **wormsdirect** 

Worms for composting, green waste recycling and soil improvement
Visit www.wormsdirect.co.uk or call 01245 381933

Composting & Garden Worms

Garden Worms to improve soil

 **YORKSHIRE-WORMS.CO.UK**

Improve Your Soil 'The Natural Way'

Organic Compost Worms

www.yorkshire-worms.co.uk **07462 474 223**



Behind the scenes with... **Frances Tophill**

The bright new star of ITV's **Love Your Garden** provides sound advice for anyone new to growing or looking to progress in a career in horticulture



Gardening hasn't always been a passion for Frances Tophill. The 27-year-old first got into horticulture in her early twenties after becoming an apprentice at The Salutation Hotel in Kent. Since then, she hasn't looked back, and is now the author of her first book, *First-Time Gardener*, and co-presents *Love Your Garden* alongside Alan Titchmarsh, David Domoney and Katie Rushworth. We chatted to her about the best plan of action for beginner growers.

"I think horticulture is a very varied career as there's a huge number of

different paths to go down," she said. "You can focus on researching pests and diseases, consultancy, design, study the science of plants and even join in with the practical side of digging and woodwork. People think of it as a particular job, but there's something to suit everyone in this industry."

It can sometimes seem as though there is a lack of emphasis on horticultural careers for young people, and Frances has some useful tips for anyone looking to break the mould. "If someone's looking to get into horticulture I think that the battle is already won. The biggest challenge is getting kids to even consider it. When I was younger it was never suggested to me as a potential career. My advice is to go for it and try lots of different things. Nurseries up and down the country are always keen to take on volunteers. Schools should also do more to provide a taster of what this industry has to offer – if I'd been introduced to gardening earlier I might have discovered my passion a lot sooner."

For others who wish to start growing more in their garden, time restraints are often a challenge. Frances also commented on this issue and how to get around it: "Don't give yourself more than you can manage. It's easy to get into this hobby and end up growing too much. When you struggle to keep on top of edibles they're no longer enjoyable to care for. Start small and do what you know is possible, while adding more crops in slow stages to help gauge what you can cope with. This avoids the risk of it all becoming a chore. As gardeners become more experienced, these tasks are often relished."

Frances'

TOP CROPS FOR BEGINNERS

"The first edibles I grew were 'Autumn Bliss' raspberries, goji berries, gooseberries and currants. Fruit crops are low maintenance, produce yields every year and are really easy to manage as long as you prune them. It's a nice introduction to growing your own as you're often rewarded with great, bountiful harvests."

"A good veg to start with is tomatoes. Varieties like 'Tumbling Tom' and types you can grow in a patio pot will give you a really high chance of success and plenty of pickings. I often think gardening is seen as a purely practical thing, but there's lots of beautiful crops out there, like cavolo nero, rainbow chard and ruby chard. They'd fit in just as well on a flower bed as they would on the plot."



THE EXPERTS' CHOICE

The Future Shape of Gardening

Whatever you grow, it will thrive in an Air-Pot container.



Our secret is the structure of the pot wall, which guarantees the development of healthy non-circling roots. Better roots means better take up of nutrient and water, faster growth, healthier plants and bigger yields.

For over twenty years the system has been the choice of leading professional growers. Now due to popular demand we have developed the Air-Pot Garden Range, which is now available through our website shop.

www.air-pot.com/garden

Verm-X®

Natural Control of Intestinal Hygiene

VETERINARY
APPROVED
AVIAN

HEALTHY CHICKENS, HAPPY YOU.



Terry Beebe
Respected poultry breeder and author.

“I have worked with Verm-X for over 7 years and I recommend it to all Poultry Keepers.”



'You can eat the eggs whilst feeding Verm-X'



Please call us for a free brochure or visit www.verm-x.com

Are you concerned about using pharmaceuticals?

Feeding **Verm-X** to your chickens or ducks and other poultry is the natural and organic way to improve intestinal hygiene by providing daily protection keeping your birds healthy and you happy.

With 100% natural ingredients, when feeding award winning **Verm-X** you can continue to enjoy fresh eggs every day, no wastage as when using some pharmaceutical preparations.

Verm-X consists of herbs that have been used for centuries as a natural way to control intestinal hygiene along with many other benefits that will make your birds shine with health.



Recommended by vets **Verm-X®** for poultry is available in a pelleted or liquid form.

Verm-X is the only product of its type which is licensed for use in organic systems.



Suitable for



The herbs used in our Verm-X formulations include:

Cinnamon, Garlic, Peppermint, Common Thyme, Cleavers, Cayenne, Quassia, Fennel, Nettle (Iron), Slippery Elm and Echinacea.

NO ARTIFICIAL CHEMICALS

“Having such a powerful and effective product containing only herbs for supporting the intestines during periods of challenge and that promotes health is a revelation.”

Recommended by Vets

See Vet Nick Thompson's talk on herbs [You Tube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)



Verm-X®

Natural Control of Intestinal Hygiene

An effective formulation for supporting intestinal health during periods of challenge

Available from your local pet and country retailer or online



Equine



Smallholder Animals



Pets



Avian



Please call us or check our website for your nearest stockist www.verm-x.com +44 (0)870 850 2313 sales@verm-x.com

Paddocks Farm Partnership Ltd, Somerset, TA4 2HQ UK